ADVISORY BOARD

Professor Julia Annas, *University of Arizona*
Professor Rachel Barney, *University of Toronto*
Professor Susanne Bobzien, *All Souls College, Oxford*
Professor Riccardo Chiaradonna, *Università degli Studi Roma Tre*
Professor Alan Code, *Stanford University*
Professor Dorothea Frede, *Universität Hamburg*
Professor Brad Inwood, *Yale University*
Professor A. A. Long, *University of California, Berkeley*
Professor Martha Nussbaum, *University of Chicago*
Professor David Sedley, *University of Cambridge*
Professor Richard Sorabji, *King’s College, University of London, and Wolfson College, Oxford*
Professor Gisela Striker, *Harvard University*
Professor Christopher Taylor, *Corpus Christi College, Oxford*

Contributions and books for review should be sent to the Editor, Professor Victor Caston, Department of Philosophy, University of Michigan, 435 South State Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1003, USA (e-mail oxfordstudies@umich.edu).

Contributors are asked to observe the ‘Notes for Contributors to Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy’, printed at the end of this volume.

Up-to-date contact details, the latest version of Notes for Contributors, and publication schedules can be checked on the *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* website:

www.oup.co.uk/philosophy/series/osap
EDITORIAL

With this volume of *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, the baton has passed again and a new editorship begun. The first thing I would like to do is warmly thank the outgoing editor, Brad Inwood, for making the transition as smooth as it could be and for all his help and encouragement. Throughout the process, he has been the very model of good judgement, taste, and remarkable efficiency, in every way an ideal to aspire towards. If I am able to replicate even some of his virtues, I will be well satisfied.

I would also like to thank the Advisory Board for their continuing support and advice and to welcome several new members. In addition to Brad Inwood, who as outgoing editor will join the Board, there will be three new members: Rachel Barney (University of Toronto), Riccardo Chiaradonna (Università degli Studi Roma Tre), and Alan Code (Stanford University). I look forward to working together with the Board in the coming years to maintain the high standards that have become the hallmark of the series.

Less visible, but no less essential, are the contributions of people who work behind the scenes, above all our anonymous readers, who are the true unsung heroes of this endeavour. In my career, I have rarely seen reports of this kind: expert, rigorous, and tough-minded, as one might expect, yet also remarkably constructive and aimed at improving the submission, whether for our pages or for those ultimately in another series. It is a privilege to work with colleagues with such a strong sense of professionalism.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude for the generous support, moral as well as material, provided by the Departments of Philosophy and Classical Studies at the University of Michigan, and by Peter Momtchiloff and his staff at Oxford University Press, who have always worked to achieve the highest standards in the production of our volumes.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parmenides’ Likely Story</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOMAS KJELLER JOHANSEN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Moral and Literary Character of Hippias in Plato’s <em>Hippias Major</em></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANCO V. TRIVIGNO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why the Philosopher Kings Will Believe the Noble Lie</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATHERINE ROWETT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristotle on Truth-Bearers</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID CHARLES AND MICHAIL PERAMATZIS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Stoic Argument from <em>oikeiōsis</em></td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JACOB KLEIN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander against Galen on Motion: A Mere Logical Debate?</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORNA HARARI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational Assent and Self-Reversion: A Neoplatonist Response to the Stoics</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URSULA COOPE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Sense and Extra Powers: A Discussion of Anna Marmodoro, <em>Aristotle on Perceiving Objects</em></td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLAUS CORCILIUS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Index Locorum</em></td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The relationship between the way of Truth and the way of opinion (doxa) in Parmenides continues to exercise scholars. At its crudest the problem is this: the way of Truth tells us that being is one and changeless, and the only thing that can be thought and talked about, yet the way of doxa develops a cosmology premised on change and plurality. How can Parmenides do both?¹

This paper has another go at the question. It argues that being and the cosmos are related as model to likeness in a way that allows the cosmos to have some degree of being and intelligibility. Parmenides lays out criteria of intelligible discourse which are paradigmatically met by being. By partially fulfilling those criteria the cosmos comes to resemble being and thereby achieves a degree of intelligibility and reality. The cosmology reads in significant ways like a precursor to the likely story of Plato’s Timaeus. This idea is not new. Indeed, already Proclus in his commentary on the Timaeus (29c) quotes Parmenides (B 1 and B 4) as saying the same thing,² only ‘being obscure because of his poetic

¹ In the words of W. K. C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, ii. The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus (Cambridge, 1965), 5: ‘Why should Parmenides take the trouble to narrate a detailed cosmogony when he has already proved that opposites cannot exist and there can be no cosmogony because plurality and change are inadmissible conceptions?’

expression’. The suggestion, however, has never been fully worked out or assessed. This is the task of the present paper.

1. The programme

The goddess first sets out her programme of instructing a young man (kouros) in B 1. 28–32:

χρεὼ δὲ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
ήμεν Ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος
ἡδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθῆς.
ἀλλ’ ἔμητης καὶ ταύτα μαθήσεαι, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα
χρὴν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα.

It is right for you to learn all things, both the unshaken heart of persuasive Truth, and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true conviction. But nevertheless you shall learn this too, how the things believed should have been believably, all pervading through everything.

Almost everything about these lines is disputed, but this much seems initially clear. There is a contrast between Truth understood as unalterable and convincing, and the beliefs of human beings which carry no true conviction. Nonetheless, the goddess says the young man should learn how it would be (or was) necessary or right for things to be believed acceptably or believably (dokimōs). From here on it is hard to say anything generally agreed by scholars. What follows is my own understanding of some of the key points in dispute. To make room for discussion of the cosmology, I shall be brief and dogmatic, referring readers, in lieu of argument, to already existing scholarship in support of my reading.

(1) ‘True conviction’ (pistis alēthēs) relates back to ‘persuasive truth’ (alētheiēs eupeitheos), by way of chiasmus, and forward to ‘credible account’ (piston logon) at B 8. 50. Pistis refers not primarily to the subjective state of being convinced but rather to the ob-

Tim. 29 c to Parmenides, but takes Plato’s reference as a correction of the Eleatic: ‘Timaeus is deliberately engaging with and seeking to correct Parmenides’ absolute dismissal of the value of thinking about the perceptible world’ (190).

3 In Tim. i. 345. 12–14 Diehl: ο δὲ γε Παρμενίδης, καίτοι διὰ πούρον ἀσαφῆς ὡν, ὄμως καὶ αὐτὸς ταύτα ἐνθεωκυκλέως φησιν.


5 Translations mine unless otherwise indicated.
jective state of something’s being convincing or probative.\(^6\) \(\textit{Alēthēs}\) does not mean simply ‘true’, but ‘genuine’. Added to \(\textit{pistis}\) it gives the sense of something’s being truly probative.\(^7\) ‘Unshaken’ reinforces the sense that this sort of truth is irrefutable.\(^8\) The effect of strengthening \(\textit{pistis}\) in these ways is to make the sense close to that of ‘proof’ or ‘demonstration’.\(^9\) Denying such a strong status to the \(\textit{doxai}\) is therefore not to exclude the possibility that they may be true, or credible or persuasive in a weaker sense.

(2) The ‘\(\textit{doxai}\) of mortals’ refers not to any actual beliefs held by known thinkers.\(^{10}\) Given the innovations Parmenides introduces,\(^{11}\) it is more likely that the phrase picks out a class of views or a kind of view. So the genitive is descriptive of the \(\textit{kind}\) of opinions that humans subscribe to, particularly as contrasted with the divine viewpoint of the goddess herself. She will then offer the young man the best within that kind of opinions so that ‘no mortal opinion shall outstrip him’ (B 8. 61).

(3) ‘The things believed’ (\(\textit{ta dokounta}\)) points to the things that are believed or beliefs understood in terms of their contents. That is, I understand the phrase to refer to the belief contents, taken \(\textit{de dicto}\). Here \(\textit{dokounta}\), however, do not simply indicate subjective appearances, as one might say ‘it seems to me’ without committing oneself to things being genuinely so.\(^{12}\) The things believed by the mortals are believed to be true. On the subjective reading \(\textit{dokimōs}\) would be otiose: the goddess is holding up beliefs to a standard of

\(^6\) ‘Taken in the sense recommended by Bryan, \textit{Likeness}, 92, of ‘persuasive force’ or ‘convincingness’.


\(^8\) One is reminded of Plato’s contrast at \textit{Tim}. 51 ε between νο \(\varsigma\) and δόξα: τ \(\omicron\) μ \(\nu\) \(\acute{\alpha}kίνητον\) πειθ \(\omicron\), τ \(\omicron\) δ \(\epsilon\) μεταπειθ \(\omicron\). Cf. also the use of \(\epsilonυκίνητος\) for a weak argument at Arist. \textit{Metaph. A} 9, 991a16.

\(^9\) Thus Finkenberg, ‘Being’, 241, argues that \(\acute{\alpha}ληθ \dot{\eta}\dot{h} \dot{e} \dot{s}\) πί\(\acute{a}t\)\(\acute{i}\)\(s\) is an apodeictic, necessary argument. So the contrast is with the non-apodeictic argument. One might add: given the modal complement, the way of Truth will provide necessary conclusions. I shall in this paper use ‘Truth’ with a capital to refer to this strong notion of ‘true conviction’.


\(^{11}\) For a high estimate of Parmenides as an innovative astronomer see D. W. Graham, \textit{Explaining the Cosmos: The Ionian Tradition in Scientific Philosophy [Explaining]} (Princeton, 2006), 179–82.

\(^{12}\) Cf. A. P. D. Mourelatos., \textit{The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Word, Image, and Argument in the Fragments [Route]}, rev. edn. (Las Vegas, 2008), 196, who distinguishes a ‘phenomenological’ from a ‘criteriological’ use of ‘seeming’ verbs, arguing for the latter construal of τ \(\acute{a} δο\(\acute{\kappa}\)ο\(\acute{\iota}\)\(\acute{n}\)\(\acute{\iota}\)\(\nu\)\(\tau\)a, which he glosses ‘the things found or deemed acceptable’ or ‘things as they have been accepted’ (290).
credibility. But the construal also contrasts with taking the expression *de re* as whatever real-world items or affairs the *dokounta* might pick out, whether or not mortals so conceive them. The goddess is interested not just in what the world believed in is like, but in how one should believe the world to be, how one should represent it. For the young man should learn (*mathēseai*) these beliefs, hearing, as we are told later (B 8. 52), the *order* (*kosmos*) of the goddess’s words. Specifically, we will be told about how certain basic opposites explain the world order. In this way, it would be possible—*contra* the *de re* reading—to hold true beliefs but in the wrong way: for example, if one did not present the principles of the cosmos in their proper explanatory role. *Ta dokounta*, then, refers to a belief system, to be entertained in a particular manner, rather than to a state of the world as such.

(4) *Chrēn* is to be taken counterfactually rather than historically.\(^\text{13}\) So the sense is how what is believed should have been believed to be or ought to have been (*einai*) believably (*dokimōs*), though these are not how things have been taken by mortals to be. The counterfactual points, then, not to how the world ought to have been but is not, which would make the cosmology fictional. Rather, it points to how the world ought to have been believed or represented to be (see (3) above), but is not believed to be. What is counterfactual is what is believed *dokimōs*, the goddess’s account of the cosmos, in relation to what is and has actually been believed by people. This goes with the fact, noted by scholars,\(^\text{14}\) that the goddess’s cosmology in the way of *doxa* has not been articulated before.

(5) *Dokimōs* indicates the condition of reliability or acceptability that the beliefs of mortals so far have failed to comply with.\(^\text{15}\) The term clearly plays on *doxa* and *dokounta*. Reinforcing the *de dicto* reading, *dokimōs* stresses the correct manner of entertaining the *dokounta*. It does so by introducing a notion of a standard or test of credibility.\(^\text{16}\) As we shall see, this test is essentially the same


\(^{15}\) See Mourelatos, *Route*, 204.

as the one that being passes and so makes it an object of *alēthēs pistis*. This creates a certain tension between the two terms *dokounta* and *dokimōs*, which Parmenides exploits:

what is believed falls short of *alēthēs pistis*, yet it will be held to standards of credibility that can properly be met only by genuine proof. How beliefs can do so is at this point left intriguingly open, but the answer, I shall suggest, will lie in the extent to which *ta dokounta* match the signs (*sēmata*) which, as at B 8. 2–3, ultimately single out being as the only genuine object of enquiry.

Owen overstates his case when he argues that *dokimōs* serves to exclude the possibility that any *dokounta* could be in any way reliable:

There can be no degrees of reality: what exists must πάμπαν πελέναι, on pain of being nothing at all. But all such general issues apart, Wilamowitz’s sense cannot be got from the Greek. Where δοκίμως is attested elsewhere (Aeschylus, *Persae* 547, Xenophon, *Cyr.* i. 6. 7) the lexica and the editors rightly translate it ‘really, genuinely’, and the earlier editors of Parmenides had no doubt that this was its sense in the present context. The δοκίμως is the reliable man, not one who measures up to some standards but fails the main test. So δοκίμως εἶναι is assuredly to exist; and this is what the phenomenal world can never do for Parmenides’ goddess. The same fact defeats any attempt to read δοκίμως as ‘in a manner appropriate to δοκοῦντα’.

Owen is too quick to dismiss Wilamowitz. First, Owen assumes that ‘being’ throughout the poem means ‘existing’, and that for that reason there cannot be degrees, ways, or kinds of being. But as subsequent scholarship has demonstrated, the idea of being as pure existence is not representative of how philosophers of the age used the term ‘to be’ (*einaï*). Generally, to be is to be something or other. So being of the sort dealt with by the way of Truth may be something that εἶναι δοκίμως involves passing through a δοκιμασία, namely the ἔλεγχος referred to at B 7. 3–6.

---


or other, and fully (*pampan*) be what it is, while the objects of *doxai* may be in some other respect, and not fully be whatever it is. In contrast, if existence is an all-or-nothing affair, it makes little sense to say that while only being completely exists, the objects of *doxa* exist but not fully so.

Second, while the linguistic observation about *dokimōs* is right, it does not support Owen’s strong conclusion. For if being does not in this context mean existing in the all-or-nothing manner Owen assumes, then it is open for the *dokounta* to be in some way even if it is not the way of the being that the Truth picks out. So the *dokounta* may achieve a manner of *einai dokimōs*, though it would not match being. After all, a man may be genuinely reliable but as a *man* not be as reliable as a mathematical proof. We should allow *dokimōs* to indicate reliability of the sort appropriate to what it qualifies. We need to know more, then, about how being is qualified so that it allows of a degree reliability that is not available to the *dokounta* given what they are. Moreover, the linguistic connection between *dokimōs*, *dokounta*, *doxa* supports this suggestion: using an adverbial form of the *dok* -root hot on the heels of the other two forms would be misleading if Parmenides did not mean, at least in part, to advert to a manner in which *doxai* can be held. To say in what way the objects of belief would have to be acceptably (*dokimōs*) by using a *dok* -word to indicate the very way they could never qualify would surely be perverse. Better, then, to understand the term as reliable in a manner that is available to *doxai*, though their degree of reliability will be assessed according to a test that only being will be seen wholly to pass. *Dokimōs*, so taken, seems also to be echoed by *kata doxan* in B 19, and gives a plausible background to the goddess’s later justification for offering the way of *doxa* in B 8. 60–1: to the extent that the account of the *doxa* obtains *dokimōs*, it is under-

---

20 For the need to observe the connection between the *δοκ* -words see Mourelatos, *Route*, 195–205.

21 Owen’s strategy of seeing the *δοκίμως* from the mortals’ perspective rather than the goddess’s does not work in any case, since the mortals do not see their *δόξα* as mere *δοκοῦντα* but as *δόντα*, and surely *δοκοῦντα* has to be viewed from the same perspective as *δοκίμως*.

standable why no human would ever (ou mē pote) outstrip the young man possessed of this account. On Owen’s reading, why should we trust the way of *doxa* always to defeat competing appearances?

(6) The effect of combining the counterfactual *chrên* with *dokimôs* can be gauged only if we add in the clause *dia pantos panta perônta* (‘all pervading through everything’). Rather than simply understanding *dokimôs* as a complement to the subject, in which case we might expect an adjective, we should see it as qualifying the full complement: ‘should have been all (sc. *ta dokounta*) pervading through everything’. The clause specifies the condition for the beliefs’ being acceptable: only if we premiss *ta dokounta* on all things pervading throughout will the beliefs be acceptable. The counterfactual is used also because people have not based their beliefs on this condition. This, then, is the bit that mortals do not generally, but should, concern themselves with: how they ought to have thought of things, considering them as pervading throughout everything.\(^2^3\)

(7) The condition *dia pantos panta perônta* anticipates Parmenides’ own description of being later in the poem. By satisfying this condition the *dokounta* will emerge as similar to being. So as we shall see, the way of *doxa* will be premised on plurality and change, but will try to make its subject as similar as possible to the unitary and changeless being described in the Way of Truth. Plurality is anticipated in B 1 by the plurals *dokounta* and *panta*, while *perônta* suggests the motion of everything passing through everything. The passing through everything (*dia pantos*) will be seen to mirror the saturation, homogeneity, and completeness of what is.\(^2^4\)

2. The signs on the way of being

At the beginning of B 8 the goddess says that there are very many ‘signs’ (*sēmata*) along the route of what is. ‘Signs’ is clearly a word that fits well with the imagery of a route or path (*hodos*), and we

---

\(^2^3\) Mourelatos, *Route*, 212–16, argues for the reading *περ ὄντα*, which he understands as equivalent in force to ‘qua being’. The reading is less likely on linguistic grounds, as one might expect the form *ἐόντα*. However, adopting it would rather reinforce the point that the *dokounta* are to be described in a way that strengthens their similarity to being.

\(^2^4\) B 8. 24: πᾶν δ’ ἐμπλεόν ἐστιν ἐόντος; B 8. 42–3: τετελεσμένον ἐστι | πάντοθεν; B 8. 49: πάντοθεν ἵσον.
may understand the term in this context as a signpost or marker indicating whether we are travelling the right way.\(^{25}\) This suggestion does not, of course, exclude the possibility that the markers are also properties of being. However, it seems possible in principle to distinguish between what it is to be a sign on the route and what it is to be a property of being. For as markers the signs serve a further epistemic function in relation to the enquirer, namely that of indicating that he is travelling in a certain direction.\(^{26}\) As signposts they tell us something about what we are looking for, and they offer us information by which we can identify the object of our enquiry.\(^{27}\) It is clear that the markers taken together identify nothing other than what is. However, the importance of distinguishing the role of the properties as markers is that one may allow, at least in principle, that the markers are not just properties of being even if, by following them all, one inevitably ends up at what is. Given that there is a plurality of signs, ‘a great many’ of them as emphasized by the goddess, it might be possible for another object to realize some of the properties, even if not all. We need not exclude, then, the possibility that we might find some of these properties also recurring as signs along the route of \textit{doxa}, even if not all the signs could do so. It is after all not uncommon that at the beginning of a journey one travels along a route that can lead to several destinations.

Here are the signs, as listed in B 8, in the order mentioned:

What is

\( a \) is ungenerated, imperishable (ll. 3, 6–21);
\( b \) is whole, unperturbed, complete\(^{28}\) (ll. 4, 38);
\( c \) never was, will not be, is now (l. 5);
\( d \) is indivisible, all alike, and continuous (ll. 22–5, 45);
\( e \) is changeless, motionless (ll. 26, 38);
\( f \) is steadfast, limited by Necessity (l. 30);
\( g \) has nothing else next \([\text{parex}]\) to it (l. 36);

\(^{25}\) Cf. Mourelatos, \textit{Route}, 24 n. 40; P. Curd, \textit{The Legacy of Parmenides: Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought} [\textit{Legacy}] (1988; repr. Las Vegas, 2004), 51 n. 75, goes one step further and compares the \(\sigma\hat{\iota}\mu\alpha\tau\alpha\) to turnstiles.

\(^{26}\) Cf. Curd, \textit{Legacy}, 48 n. 68: ‘the signs in B 8 function both as characteristics of the natures that are reached by proper inquiry and regulating principles for that inquiry’.

\(^{27}\) There are plenty of instances of this use of \(\sigma\hat{\iota}\mu\alpha\) in the recognition scenes in \textit{Odyssey} 23 (e.g. the scar at line 73 and the bed at line 188).

\(^{28}\) Reading \(\dot{\eta}\dot{d}e\ \tau\varepsilon\lambda\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\) in 8. 4. See Palmer, \textit{Parmenides}, 383.
Parmenides’ Likely Story

(h) is complete and equal from every direction, ‘like a well-rounded ball’ (ll. 42–4, 49).

3. The third path

All of these signs indicate characteristics along the route of what is;²⁹ none is a property of what is not, whose road has already been declared altogether inscrutable (B 2). However, this leaves us with the third road, referred to in B 6,³⁰ and plausibly identified with the mortal opinions of B 1:

χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ ᾿ ἐὸν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι, μηδὲν δ ’ οὐκ ἔστιν· τὰ σ ’ ἐγὼ φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα. πρώτης γὰρ σ ’ αἱ ὅδοι παῦσας διαξήσωσι (εἰργώ),³¹ αὐτὰρ ἐπείτ’ ἀπό τῆς, ἡν δὴ βροτοί εἰδότες οὐδὲν πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται κυψεῖ κυφοὶ ἀμωμὸς τυφλοὶ τε, τεθηπότες, ἀκριτα φῦλα, οῖς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οἰκεῖ εἶναι ταῦτα νενόμισται κοὐ ταῦτων, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπος ἔστι κέλευθος.

It is right to say and to think that what-is is, for it is for being, and nothing is not. These things I bid you consider. From this first way of inquiry (I withhold) you, but then from this one, which mortals knowing nothing wander, two-headed. For helplessness in their breasts directs a wandering mind; and they are borne both deaf and blind, dazed, undiscerning tribes, by whom to be and not to be are thought to be the same and not the same, and the path of all is backward-turning.

(trans. Graham)

The third path is one that combines what is and what is not. While this is not a path that leads to true conviction, it is nonetheless referred to as a ‘path’ (hodos/keleuthos) which is partly characterized by what is. It is reasonable, therefore, to expect that what is


³⁰ I side with the majority of scholars in distinguishing three roads for the sorts of reasons given by Palmer, Parmenides, 63–85, and McKirahan, ‘Signs’. For an argument that there are only two roads see Curd, Legacy, 53–60.

³¹ I retain Diels’s reading, against the suggestions of ἀρτεω (A. Nehamas) or ἀτετει (N.-L. Cordero). For helpful discussion of the options see Palmer, Parmenides, 65–9.
Thomas Kjeller Johansen
described on the path to some extent will have the properties of the
signs.

The mortals who travel this path are described as utterly confused. It is not clear whether this degree of confusion is entirely the
result of the road or whether it is also caused by the ignorance of the
people, that is all people so far, who travel it. There are indications
that part of the problem also lies with the mortals’ disposition. So,
we are told first, they wander the road ‘knowing nothing’. Similar-
ly, it is the helplessness in their breast which directs them, rather
than simply the contours of the route itself, and this helplessness
is explained by their reliance on perception. One might well won-
der, therefore, if knowing something, specifically knowing what is,
would not make a difference to how they would approach a path
characterized by what both is and is not. And correspondingly, one
might surmise that an approach not simply reliant on perception,
but based on logos, would allow them to make more headway. The
content of their thinking is next described as ‘that what is and what
is not are both the same and not the same’. This is clearly a way
of specifying the route, a route which is neither just of what is, nor
just of what is not, but combines in some manner the two. However,
the specification is perhaps unnecessarily befuddled, reflecting the
mortals’ general confusion when faced with a road that combines
two opposites. There may well be a way of understanding a route
that combines what is and what is not in a way that does not involve
one in a double self-contradiction, and it may well be an under-
standing available only to one such as the goddess, or now also the
young man, who has properly understood the nature of what is.
When we come to the goddess’s own cosmology, we shall see that
there is a way of talking about the world as both being and not be-
ing which is far less confusing.32 Finally, we should note that it is
not the path without qualification that is referred to as ‘backward-
turning’, but the path of all, again perhaps an indication that it is
the path as it has been travelled by mortals, which ultimately leads
nowhere.33

32 One is reminded of the enigma in Republic 5, 479 b–c, about the eunuch who
threw something at a bat, which is used by Socrates to illustrate how the object
of belief is what both is and is not. Behind the riddle there is a less confusing an-
swer.

33 κέλευθος, like ὁδός, can mean either the path or the journey; see LSJ s.vv.
In B 8. 53–9 the goddess returns to this third way, introducing her own cosmology. She indicates how the third way involves both what is and what is not. As we shall see, the best way is one that maximizes the similarity of what is and what is not to what is. So it is an account that maximizes the similarity of the way of doxa to the way of Truth. It should be clear that no mortal ‘knowing nothing’ could devise or appreciate this kind of account:

For they made up their minds to name two forms, of which it is not right to name one—this is where they have gone astray—and they distinguished contraries in body and set signs apart from each other: to this form the ethereal fire of flame, being gentle, very light, everywhere the same as itself, not the same as the other; but also that one by itself contrarily unintelligent night, a dense body and heavy.

The mortals have posted signs of their own, characteristics that are opposed to each other. However, there is no implication yet that the mortals have posited these two forms as the fundamental principles of everything. In B 19 the goddess says that ‘humans laid down a name (again katehtent’), a mark for each’. Here the mistake

34 On the reading see Palmer, *Parmenides*, 386.
36 Coxon, *Fragments*, 314, commenting on B 8. 1–2, emphasizes the conventional flavour of ἐθεντο: ‘the phrase σηματ’ easi contrasts with σηματ’ ethento [“assigned . . . marks”] (l. 55); the contrast indicates that, while the characteristics of the two Forms into which P. analyses the physical world are, like the Forms themselves, empirical and conventional in status, those of Being are objectively real.’
is similar but there is no indication that laying down a mark for something makes it a basic principle. Clearly people, before and after Hesiod’s *Theogony*, talked of night and day as different and as opposites without necessarily constructing a cosmology on that basis. It is the *goddess* who uses light and darkness as principles of cosmology. There is no need, therefore, to hunt for any particular historical figures who have subscribed to these two as their principles. Yet the adoption of light and darkness as principles may still qualify as mortal opinions, since these are opposite attributes that mortals recognize as real.

The goddess says that they are mistaken in this assumption. We can see why from signpost (g) on the way of what is: what truly is is one and unique, while mortals posit two contrary forms, separately from each other (B 8. 51–6). It is not possible simply on linguistic grounds to determine whether the goddess thinks the mistake is positing any of the two, as Cornford took it, or a particular one of the two, say, darkness rather than light, as Popper argued, or the other way around, as Aristotle read Parmenides (*Metaph. A 5, 986b27–987a2*). What seems to clinch the case in favour of Cornford is the parallel ways in which the goddess goes on to describe the two. The mistake, then, relative to the way of Truth, lies in positing *two* forms (and after all the goddess does not tell us what they are until after she has pointed to the mistake). Either form can be viewed as being in its own right but as not-being in relation to the other. The significant aspect is that they are opposites (*antia*, 55, repeated 59), and from this point of view there is no reason to single out one rather than the other as the odd one out.

What is striking, however, is that having indicated the mistake, the goddess proceeds to describe each of the two forms in ways which suggest that they in some manner satisfy some of the signs along the way of being. So she says of fire that it is ‘the same as it-

---

40 A further option, suggested by Coxon, *Fragments*, 344, is the mistake of taking just one of these as the cosmic principle.
41 It is also compatible with Coxon’s reading, it should be added.
42 Even G. Vlastos, ‘Parmenides’ Theory of Knowledge’, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 77 (1946), 66–77 at 76, concedes that ‘[Parmenides’] grounding in Ionian physics got the better of his contempt for
self in all directions \( [\varepsilon\omega\nu\tau\omega\iota \pi\acute{\alpha}n\tau\omicron\sigma\epsilon\ \tau\omega\upsilon\tau\omicron\omicron] \), but not the same as the other’, while the opposite, night, is also ‘by itself’ \( (k\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha} \upsilon\tau\omicron\omicron) \). The corresponding sign \( (h) \) on the way of being earlier in B 8 had been ‘equal to itself in every direction’ \( (\pi\acute{\alpha}n\tau\omicron\theta\omicron\epsilon\nu \iota\sigma\omicron\omega) \). In fragment 9 she says that ‘all is full at once of light and dark night’, but again qualifies this by saying that ‘both are equal, since neither has any share in what is not’.\(^{43}\) Here ‘all is full at once’ recalls sign \( (d) \), ‘but it is all full of what is’ \( (\pi\acute{\alpha}n \delta' \varepsilon\mu\pi\lambda\epsilon\omicron\nu \iota\sigma\tau\omicron\nu \iota\omicron\tau\omicron\sigma) \) at B 8. 24. While there are two principles, they are present equally in the entire universe. It is not clear whether this means that they are present equally all through the universe or whether they are equally represented in the universe. The alternating circles of light and dark described in A 37 may favour the second option.

However we read B 9 here, it seems clear that the two principles individually resemble what is on signs \( (h) \) and \( (d) \). The mortals go wrong in posting signs indicating a plurality of beings, when we know from the way of what is that what is is one and unique. We have according to the mortals two beings, light and night, though their manner of being, that of opposites, also implicates them in a particularly conspicuous way in not-being. One being is the same as itself—fire is the same as itself—yet it is also different from another being, night, which itself is the same as itself. By being the opposite of the other, there is a particular conceptual relation between being fire and not being night, or vice versa.\(^{44}\) As opposites, they are necessarily mutually exclusive, so being qualified by one opposite necessarily means being different from the other. Put more formally, where \( O_1 \) and \( O_2 \) are opposites, for all \( X \), if \( X \) is \( O_1 \), then, necessarily, \( X \) is different from \( O_2 \). We see, then, how it was appropriate for the goddess to charge the mortals with holding that ‘being and not being are the same and not the same’ \( (B \ 6. \ 8–9) \).

It is not just individually but also in their combination with each the mock-world of the senses, and he gave to his doctrine of Being a physical application, attributing the self-identity of Being to each component of the “deceitful” duality of Becoming.’

\(^{43}\) Adopting the translation of Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *Presocratic*. Cf. Finkelberg, ‘Being’, 234: ‘In the two last lines of the fragment Parmenides conspicuously resorts to the terminology of the *Aletheia*. The phrase \( \pi\acute{\alpha}n \pi\acute{l}\epsilon\omicron\nu \iota\sigma\tau\omicron\nu \iota\omicron\nu\omicron\phi\alpha\omicron\varsigma\ kai \nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\)’, echoing as it does \( \pi\acute{\alpha}n \delta' \varepsilon\mu\pi\lambda\epsilon\omicron\nu \iota\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\iota\omicron\tau\omicron\sigma \) at fr. 8. 24, describes the totality of the two “forms” as “fullness,” while the statement of their equal “filling ability” portrays it as uniform in its degree.’

\(^{44}\) On the opposites as ‘enantiomorphic’ see Curd, *Legacy*, 104–10.
other that the two principles bear similarities to what is. So the sphericity of the cosmos recalls the comparison of what is to a well-rounded sphere, sign \((h)\).\(^{45}\) In both cases, being and the cosmos, the spherical shape is determined by a notion of Necessity. So in B 10 it is the surrounding heavens whose growth and limits are determined by Necessity, while Necessity in B 8. 30, 37 kept what is within bounds. It is tempting to think that these must be different notions of Necessity: one in some sense logical (corresponding perhaps to \(krinai\) \(logoi\) at B 7. 5), the other in some sense physical or material.\(^{46}\) But however exactly we conceptualize these necessities, we are surely supposed to think of the cosmic order as resembling the Necessity that governs what is, according to sign \((f)\).\(^{47}\) Within the cosmos, we find circularity again at the centre of the world and in the alternating circles of light, darkness, and their mixture (A 37), as well as in the shape of individual planets such as the ‘round-eyed moon’ (B 10). Another possible reminiscence of being is the position of the earth. The earth, like being itself, is unmoving because it has no reason to incline one way rather than another (A 44). The principle of sufficient reason was used to justify sign \((a)\): as there was no need for what is to have come into being later or earlier from what is not,\(^{48}\) it has not come into being at all. The principle thus seems equally applicable to being and the cosmos. This suggests again an attempt to maximize the intelligibility of the cosmos by the standards that also apply to being. All seem clear indications that Parmenides \(models\) the cosmos, as a whole and in its parts, on being.

\(^{45}\) The observation of D. N. Sedley, ‘Parmenides and Melissus’, in A. A. Long (ed.), \(The\) \(Cambridge\) \(Companion\) to \(Early\) \(Greek\) \(Philosophy\) (Cambridge, 1999), 113–33 at 121, that the words \(\mu\varepsilon\sigma\sigma\omicron\omega\theta\varepsilon\nu\ \iota\sigma\sigma\pi\alpha\lambda\varepsilon\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\gamma\) fall outside the scope of the comparison (which is in the dative), is significant evidence in favour of a literal spatial interpretation. On the other hand, if Parmenides literally meant that being was a sphere, why say that it is \(like\) a sphere (cf. Eudemus fr. 45 Wehrli)?

\(^{46}\) See Palmer, \(Parmenides\), 176. While I am sympathetic to Palmer’s modal reading, I think it remains an issue for him to explain just how the Necessity that rules the cosmos is compatible with the contingent status of the cosmos.

\(^{47}\) As observed by Cornford, ‘Two Ways’, 110, ‘The geometrical Sphere fettered by Necessity in the bonds of its mathematical limit (circumference) has now become the Sphere of the visible Heaven, that will be fettered by Necessity to hold the limits of the visible fiery stars.’

\(^{48}\) B 8. 9–10: \(τί \ δ’ \ ἰν\ \ μὴν\ \ καὶ\ \ χρέος\ \ ἄρσεν\ \ |\ \ ὕστερον\ \ ὃ\ \ πρόσθεν,\ \ τοῦ\ \ μὴ\ \ ἑθενὸς\ \ ἀρξόμενον,\ \ φῶν;\)
5. Mixture in the cosmos

The cosmos’s likeness to what is is increased further by light and darkness being not just juxtaposed but also mixed. Some of the rings surrounding the earth are just fiery and some just dense, but others are mixed. Some elements arise from fire or earth: so air is a vaporized earth, and the moon is a mixture of such air and fire. Aristotle claims that Parmenides generally made the other elements mixtures of fire and earth (GC 2. 3, 330b13–15). Such mixtures would seem to represent, in some manner, the co-presence of the two principles in the cosmos. The separation of the two which Parmenides posited in B 8. 56 cannot be a complete physical one, and we might say that there is an extent to which the elements in the cosmos form a complete whole and ‘hold together’.49 Mixture has been chosen as the way of establishing unity and homogeneity among such a plurality of elements. It is plausible to think that the principles have, at least in part, been chosen as two opposites exactly because these will allow for a mixture, and thereby for the co-presence of a plurality of elements.50

As we saw, the opposites, light and darkness, were presented as being and not-being, relative to each other. The mixture of the two to create an ordered whole that resembles being, with respect to the signs, is particularly striking, given the goddess’s insistence that the young man must distinguish (krinai, B 7. 5) between being and not-being, and of the two only being will allow for true thought.51 One might think that this contrast undermines the epistemological status of cosmology: whatever is intelligible about the cosmos is just the extent to which it is. However, there are two ways of interpreting this condition: either as a claim that only pure being can be thought about, or as the claim that being and not-being together understood in the right way can be similar to pure being and so to that extent be thought of. My suggestion is that the mixture of opposites offers us this second perspective. When the light and darkness are juxtaposed or mixed, the not-being that qualified them as opposites can from the point of view of the whole be seen as cancelled out.

49 For a fuller list of similarities between the ways of being and δόξα see Mourelatos, Route, 248–9.
50 e.g. on the Aristotelian thought that ‘only those agents are combinable which involve a contrariety’ (GC 1. 10, 328a31–2).
51 I am grateful to an anonymous reader for making this point.
It is open for us, therefore, to think, as I have argued, that in the mixture of the two the cosmos achieves another sort of assimilation to being, one that is premissed not on strict unity of the sort that characterized being in the way of Truth but on a unity in plurality. Similarly, I have suggested, in the regularity of the circular heavenly motions the cosmos achieves not a strict changelessness, but a sameness in change. If this makes Parmenides’ cosmos seem to some extent Heraclitean, a world in which oneness is found in opposites and change, this may be no accident. The upshot of the poem is not to ban Heraclitus, but to put him in his place.

6. The world as diakosmos

The cosmos is governed to form a well-ordered whole, a diakosmos, as Parmenides promised (B 8. 60). The term diakosmos, by its implication of a complete whole, is itself reminiscent of sign (b), ‘whole, unperturbed, complete’. Unlike being, the cosmos is a whole of moving parts, unified through circular arrangements and mixtures and regulated in its changes by Necessity. However, the cosmos, as we have seen, bears the hallmark of an attempt to maximize its similarity to what is. As Graham says pointedly: ‘Were it not for a few crucial lines of Parmenides’ exposition, we might think that his cosmology was a perfect realization of the principles of ontology developed in the Aletheia.’ The signs spell out what has to hold of any subject of truthful discourse. What is paradigmatically satisfies those criteria. However, the way of doxa shows another way in which a pluralistic, changing subject could also in some manner satisfy those criteria. The way of doxa reapplies some of the signs, (a), (b), (d), (f), and (g), to show a way in which this kind of subject might aspire to match them.

Recall from B 1 the task of showing how things believed would have to be believably, dia pantos panta perônta. This dia pantos panta echoes in diakosmos when the goddess says at the end of B 8. 60–1:

52 As the anonymous reader rightly remarks.
54 Graham, Explaining, 171.
Parmenides’ Likely Story

τόν σοι ἐγὼ διάκοσμον ἐοικότα πάντα φατίζω,
ὡς οὐ μὴ ποτέ τίς σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσημ.

To you I declare this thorough ordering [diakosmos], which is
entirely likely [eoikōs],
So that no mortal opinion should ever outstrip you.

One might surmise, therefore, that the diakosmos answers to B 1’s
call for acceptable beliefs. The diakosmos would be a thorough or-
dering of many things in motion. As we have seen, such a whole of
parts can be a unity; change regulated by necessity can be stable. So
a material cosmos can to some degree meet some of the standards
of intelligibility, but the manner in which it meets them is of course
different from that of being.

The same signs that led us to being serve, then, as criteria of suc-
cess for the way of doxa. For the criteria of talking correctly about
being are also the criteria of correct thinking:

ταὐτὸν δ’ ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὕνεκεν ἐστι νόημα.
οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐν ὧι πεφατισμένον ἐστιν,
eὑρήσεις τὸ νοεῖν.

(B 8. 34–6)

The same thing is for thinking and is wherefore there is thought. For not
without what-is, to which it is directed, will you find thought. (trans. Gra-
ham)

Being continues to present a paradigm as an object for correct think-
ing also when we turn to the doxai. The goddess emphasizes in B 10
that the young man will know various things about the cosmos; so
it cannot be that the cosmos is beyond intelligibility. But if so, the
account of doxai will be better, more intelligible, to the extent that it
presents the perceptible qualities as sharing the characteristics be-
ing displays—that is, in so far as they follow the signs the goddess
has laid out in the way of being. For these are the signs that direct
correct thinking. We would expect, then, these signs to be reapplied

351, also notes that ‘Parmenides’ claim of “complete” likeness for his world-system,
made in the word panta [“in its entirety”], is anticipated in the final words of the
prologue dia pantos panta perōnta [“ranging through all things from end to end”]
(fr. 1, 32); the participle eoikota similarly develops the sense already conveyed there
by the adverb dokimōs [“in general acceptance”].

56 B 10. 1: εἰση; B 10. 4: πεύση; B 10. 5: εἰδήσεις. See further J. Lesher, ‘Early
Interest in Knowledge’ [‘Early’], in A. A. Long (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to
Early Greek Philosophy (Cambridge, 1999), 225–49 at 240.
in some way in attempting to think about the cosmos. We would expect the cosmos, to the extent that it is intelligible, to resemble being on the fundamental points of the signs.

Since, as the goddess says, ‘the same thing is there for thinking and for being’ (B 3), we may take the extent to which the cosmos meets the criteria of intelligibility also to be indicative of the extent to which it is. The extent to which the cosmos satisfies the signs, then, also indicates the extent to which it is like the being that the signs in their totality identify. One might also say that the cosmos enjoys a degree of being, by analogy with its having a degree of intelligibility, if by that is meant just that the cosmos shares some of the characteristics of the signs. For while the signs taken together are uniquely characteristic of being, they are not individually unique to being, but may, as we have seen, in some instances also be shared by the cosmos.

7. Parmenides and the *Timaeus*

On this reading, there is a parallel to Plato’s *Timaeus*. Here the account of the cosmos is likely (eikōs) to the extent that it correctly represents the cosmos as a likeness (eikōn) of its paradigm, eternal being.\(^{57}\) What it means to say that the cosmos is a likeness of eternal being is not that it has exactly the same characteristics as being; in other words, it is not that the cosmos is somehow a copy or replica of its paradigm. The cosmos is rather a likeness or image of being, where the likeness refigures characteristics of being in a different medium of change and plurality. So, *Timaeus* argues, the cosmos is characterized by time, which is a moving likeness in number of an unchanging unity; and the world is shaped like a sphere as a spatial image of the conceptual completeness of the eternal paradigm.\(^{58}\) What is required of cosmology is an account of how the characteristics of being can best be translated into the medium of becoming. The account that does this best is the likely account. Similarly, Parmenides’ cosmology reinterprets the characteristics of being, the signs, so as to apply to a world of change and plurality. Unity lies

\(^{57}\) *Tim.* 29 B–D.

in the mixture of several ingredients, changelessness lies in the Necessity that regulates the movements of the heavens. In this way the cosmos emerges as a likeness of being.

If this is right, it is tempting to understand *eoikota* in the goddess’s phrase *diakosmon eoikota* positively in the sense of ‘likely’. One might even, as was suggested by Wilamowitz, take the term as anticipating Plato’s application of *eikōs* in the *Timaeus* to cosmology. Timaeus applies the term to an account that shows the cosmos to be a likeness of true reality, the eternal Forms. Likelihood is then a positive value for cosmology to aim at: the better the account represents the world as a likeness, the more likely it is. Plato may well have taken a leaf from Parmenides’ use of *eoikōs* if he understood Parmenides’ being as the reality which the cosmos is shown to resemble in the way of *doxa*. I shall return to this comparison at the end of the paper.

8. Deception

However, *eoikōs* is a famously slippery term, which may equally carry an implication of deceptiveness. Coming after the goddess’s explicit warning eight lines back that the ordering (*kosmos*) of her words will be deceptive (*apatēlos*), there is a reasonable presumption that *eoikōs* highlights the mere likelihood—but actual falsehood—of the account. And so the parallel with Plato’s constructive use of *eikōs* as a positive standard of likeness would be off. More fundamentally, the deceptiveness of the way of *doxa* would seem to undermine the claim that the goddess’s cosmology is the best because it is the one most like the unalterable Truth.

Deceitfulness is of course different from falsehood. So at Plato, *Critias* 107 C 6–D 2, Critias says ‘because of our lack of clear

---


60 For discussion of the range of possible translations see Bryan, *Likeness*, 66–78.

knowledge of such matters [sc. the heavens and such], we don’t subject his [the artist’s] pictures to any searching criticism, being content with an imprecise and deceptive [apatēlos] sketch’. Here he does not mean that all representations of the heavens are false but that like shadow-plays it is not clear what they represent, so that they are likely to mislead. It is possible to present the truth in a way that in a certain context will create a false impression. Failing to respect conversational implicature is a notorious example. If I say that \(2+2\) is possibly \(4\), then that is true (ab esse ad posse), but misleading in suggesting that it is not necessarily true. Similarly, one might say that the goddess’s account will be deceptive in that it is likely to be taken as an account of the Truth, when she knows that cosmology cannot deliver this.\(^6\)

It has been rightly pointed out that this does not explain why the words should be deceptive when offered to somebody who has just been warned that the truth is different.\(^6\) However, this ignores two related features of the goddess’s account, on the reading I have been developing. One is that the ordering of the account of \(\tau\alpha\\ δοκοῦ\ ντα\) will be intelligible to the extent that it satisfies the signs postulated in the way of Truth. However, one might also say that \(\tau\alpha\\ δοκοῦ\ ντα\) to the same extent are deceptively like being: for the more the cosmos is made to resemble being, the more one might be tempted to think that the cosmos genuinely is. This means that the young man too, exactly because he is familiar with the signs of being, will be tempted to think that this cosmology could be true. ‘Deceptive ordering of my words’ may therefore serve as a warning to the young man to bear in mind, as the cosmos is described in ways that make it look ever more like being, that the cosmos is nonetheless not the real thing. Deceptiveness is in this context a consequence of the very same quality that makes the cosmology acceptable: its likeness

\(^6\) Cf. Curd, Legacy, 102.
to being.\textsuperscript{65} The cosmology is both likely and deceptive, \textit{eoikōs} in both its aspects, exactly by its likeness to the way of Truth.\textsuperscript{66} Rather like Gorgias’ intelligent theatre audience,\textsuperscript{67} the young man will have understood the cosmology well to the extent that he is tempted to be deceived.

9. Perception

One might think that this reading sits badly with the role of perception in deceiving us. Parmenides offers a general account of where mortals go wrong in B 7. 2–6:

\begin{quote}
ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ ᾿ ἀφ ᾿ ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἶργε νόημα
μηδέ σ ᾿ ἔθος πολύπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω,
νομάν ἀσκοπον ὁμμα καὶ ἡχήεσσαν ἀκουήν
καὶ γλῶσσαν, κρίναι δὲ λόγωι πολύδηριν ἐλεγχον
ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα.
\end{quote}

But you, withhold your thought from this way of enquiry, nor let habit born of long experience force you along this way, to wield an aimless eye and echoing ear and tongue. But judge by reasoning the very contentious examination uttered by me.

(trans. after Graham)

By a familiar tragic inversion,\textsuperscript{68} it is those who rely on their eyes and ears who are deaf and blind to the truth, and those who do not rely on the senses who perceive it.\textsuperscript{69} The mortals are in the habit of relying on perception in their enquiries. The pejorative epithets ‘aimless’, ‘echoing’ both underline how the senses will not lead you in the right direction along a path.\textsuperscript{70} The contrast is with discriminating just by reason.

Clearly there is a way in which the senses deceive us about reality:

\textsuperscript{65} If this was Parmenides’ sense, should he not have supplemented \textit{eoikōs} with \textit{ἐτύμοισι}, as did Xenophanes? Plato in the \textit{Timaeus} does not do so, but relies on context to show the constructive notion of likeness to the truth (or, as in Parmenides, \textit{Truth}; cf. \textit{Tim}. 29 b–c).

\textsuperscript{66} Bryan, \textit{Likeness}, 93 and \textit{passim}, highlights the duality of the term, but stresses the importance of the deceptive meaning. For a judicious critique of Bryan’s reading on this point see Mourelatos, ‘Conception’, 176–7.

\textsuperscript{67} Gorgias B 23.

\textsuperscript{68} Cf. e.g. Heraclit. B 34; Soph. \textit{OT} 412–19.

\textsuperscript{69} Cf. B 6. 4–9.

\textsuperscript{70} The echo, of course, may be heard as coming from a quite different place from its source.
they incline us to believe that change and plurality are real. But we can accept this point without compromising the claim that the goddess’s cosmology is deceptive in terms of presenting a likeness of what is. For the cosmology is a rational way of presenting the phenomena of change as real to the extent that they satisfy the criteria that the way of Truth laid out. The cosmology rationalizes, one might say here, the senses’ disposition to embrace the phenomena of change and plurality as real. The goddess’s account works with the perceptual phenomena to give them the highest level of intellectual credibility available. This increases the account’s deceptiveness since both the senses and the intellect motivate us to believe it.

Now Aristotle suggested that Parmenides in the way of *doxa* was forced to follow perception:

ἀναγκαζόμενος δ’ ἀκολουθεῖν τοῖς φαινομένοις, καὶ τὸ ἐν μὲν κατὰ τὸν λόγον πλεῖον δὲ κατὰ τὴν αἰσθήσιν ὑπολαμβάνων εἶναι, δύο τὰς αἰτίας καὶ δύο τὰς ἀρ-
χὰς πάλιν τίθησι, θερμὸν καὶ ψυχρόν, οἱὸν πῦρ καὶ γῆν λέγων· τούτων δὲ κατὰ μὲν τὸ ὄν τὸ θερμὸν τάττει θάτερον δὲ κατὰ τὸ μὴ ὄν. (Metaph. A 5, 986b31–987a2)

but being compelled to follow appearances and supposing that what is one according to reason [*logos*] is many according to sense perception, he posits two things as the causes and again as principles, hot and cold, speaking of them as fire and earth, of which he classifies the hot as what-is, the other as what-is-not.

The contrast between following reason and following perception should clearly not be taken to mean that the cosmology does not employ reason. Aristotle is not implying that Parmenides is simply describing appearances. Rather, he says that Parmenides posits two causes or principles of what appears in perception, the hot and the cold. So Parmenides is offering a causal account that attempts in some manner to explain the perceptual phenomena rationally.

One way in which following perception necessarily leads to an acknowledgement of change and duality emerges from Parmenid-

---

71 Nor is there any reason to think that Aristotle is ascribing to Parmenides the same reason for being ‘forced to follow appearances’ that he would himself subscribe to, e.g. providing the evidence that our scientific theories need to explain.

72 Like others (cf. H. Granger, ‘The Cosmology of Mortals’, in V. Caston and D. W. Graham (eds.), *Presocratic Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Alexander Mourelatos* (Aldershot, 2002), 101–18 at 111–14), I am sceptical of Aristotle’s association of specifically earth with not-being. What Parmenides may simply have meant to convey was that the two opposites as such could both be characterized as being and not being, viz. being whatever it itself is and not being the other.
Parmenides’ Likely Story

Parmenides’ own account of thinking in B 16, which, if we may trust Theophrastus (A 46), is also his account of perceiving:

\[ \text{ὥς γάρ ἐκαστός ἔχει κρῆσιν μελέων πολυπλάγτων, τῶς νόσου ἀνθρώπωσι παρέστηκεν τὸ γάρ αὐτό ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώπωσι καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντὶ τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα.} \]

For as on each occasion, he says, is the blending of the much-wandering limbs, so is thought present to humans. For the same thing is that which thinks, the nature of the limbs, in humans in both each and every one: for the greater is thought.

(trans. Palmer, Parmenides, 375, slightly revised)

Thought or perception is a special case of blending as it occurs generally. It is a special case where one part in the mixture exceeds the other. We may think of the perception of heat as occurring when hot predominates over cold in the body’s constitution. Perception and thinking register opposites as they come to qualify the perceiver or thinker. The two principles, Light and Night, posited at the beginning of the cosmology are applied to explain cognition in particular. Perception and thinking are then phenomena which themselves can be understood only against the background of plurality—and, we might add, against the background of change in so far as the changing balance in the mixtures of opposites will give rise to perception and thought of the opposite that comes to predominate. Given that this is how perception works, it is not surprising if ‘following perception’ leads to recognition of change and plurality.

10. The cosmos as a likeness

I have suggested that there is a likeness between being and the phenomena. But is this likeness a mere similarity or are the phenomena

\[ \text{73 See further A. Laks, ““The More” and “the Full”: On the Reconstruction of Parmenides’ Theory of Sensation in Theophrastus, De sensibus, 3–4’, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 8 (1990), 1–18.} \]

\[ \text{74 Text from Palmer, Parmenides, 374.} \]

\[ \text{75 For an illuminating analysis of this idea see E. Hussey, ‘Parmenides on Thinking’, in R. King (ed.), Common to Body and Soul: Philosophical Approaches to Explaining Living Behaviour in Greco-Roman Antiquity (Berlin and New York, 2006), 13–30.} \]
as they are because they thereby resemble being? It has been suggested that being is related to the perceptual phenomena rather in the manner of an Aristotelian substance to its accidents. In this way the phenomena could be the way they are because they are causally determined by an underlying substance. The problem with this suggestion in Parmenides is that it is hard to see any causal relationship between what is and the phenomena. There is nothing, after all, about being itself to cause things to come into being or pass away.

In the *Timaeus* the phenomena resemble being because of the efforts of a creator god, who made the world resemble being. One could think of the relationship between phenomena and being in the same way: the cosmos has been made to resemble what is by a cause external to what is. But there is no direct mention of this kind of cause in Parmenides. There is, perhaps, a textual path which opens up for such an interpretation. So B 12.3–4 refers to a goddess (*daimōn*) in the middle of the cosmic rings, ‘who governs [*kubernai*] all things: for everywhere she rules over hateful birth and mixture’. The language is clearly consistent with an organizing god. Again, in B 13 the goddess is said to have ‘devised’ *Erōs*, Parmenides using a word (*mētisato*) which might equally be translated ‘crafted’. The relationship between this goddess and the goddess who is narrating the cosmology is obscure. My own suggestion would be that the cosmic goddess as herself internal and specific to the cosmos, and so subject to change and diversity, is not the same as the goddess of B 1. Yet one might view the one as a likeness of the other: the cosmic goddess in her ordering and necessitating of the phenomena imitates the goddess presiding over the way of Truth. The cosmic goddess would then be causally responsible for the order of the cosmos, and so as a cause also for the similarity between the cosmos and what is. It would be the cosmic goddess’s intellectual efforts (her steering and her crafting) that were the cause of the similarity

---


77 As Cosgrove, ‘Fresh Look’, 15, observes, ‘Parmenides nowhere suggests that *to eon* is responsible for or has somehow produced the phenomenal world of change that mortals have named.’

78 Nor are the phenomena themselves characterized as accidental if this is meant to contrast with their being necessary: the goddess takes them to be regulated by a kind of necessity, as we saw (B 10).

79 The choice of a specifically *female* cosmic goddess might strengthen the impression of a deliberate similarity to the goddess of the proem. Plato’s Demiurge returns to the Xenophanean (B 23–6) male template.
between phenomena and being. In so far as she is a god, not a human, we might think that she has access to the same knowledge of being as the goddess of the proem. In that case she would have the tools to arrange the world so as to be a likeness of being. However, again, there is no evidence in the text that the internal goddess deploys her knowledge in ordering the cosmos. So while there may be evidence that the cosmic goddess works so as to create a particular order and that being so ordered makes the cosmos similar to being, there is no evidence that she has worked the cosmos in this way in order to make it similar to being.

11. Conclusion

It seems prudent, then, to refrain from the claim that the cosmos resembles being because it has been so made. If we require from a likeness that it has come about in order to resemble its model, we should not say that the cosmos is a likeness of being. However, if we lift this causal requirement, we may say that the cosmos is a likeness of being in so far as there is a formal similarity, on some of the points of the signs, between the cosmos and being. Moreover, this similarity is clearly not a merely accidental similarity from the point of view of the poem, and so from the point of view of explaining why Parmenides constructs the cosmos the way he does. We may distinguish, after all, a causal claim (a) about the cosmos from one (b) about the cosmology, i.e.

(a) The cosmos has been made by the maker of the cosmos as a likeness of being,

for which there is insufficient evidence in the text of Parmenides, and

(b) The cosmos has been described as a likeness of being,

which we can, I have argued, justifiably attribute to Parmenides. (a), then, seems to be the distinctly Platonic innovation: the cause of the cosmos is a Demiuroge who looks to being as a paradigm and creates the cosmos as a maximal likeness of it. (b) for Plato is grounded in (a): the world is to be described as a likeness of being because it was made to resemble it.\(^8\) However, Parmenides proffers us only

\(^8\) See, in particular, *Tim.* 29 b–c, where Timaeus explains that we should aim at a likely account of the cosmos because it has been made as a likeness of being.
(b). We may press the similarity somewhat further, since both Plato and Parmenides maintain

(c) The cosmos is intelligible to the extent that it resembles being

and so also

(d) Cosmology is successful to the extent that it shows the cosmos as like being.

But Parmenides again has a different basis for maintaining (d) from Plato’s: not (a), that the cosmos has come into being as a likeness, but rather

(e) Any subject is intelligible to the extent it satisfies the signs on the way of Truth.

Since only being satisfies all of these signs, any subject that is intelligible will, to that extent, resemble being. For Parmenides, then, the interest in showing the likeness of the cosmos to being comes, as far as we can tell, out of general conditions of intelligibility rather than a specific view about the genesis of the cosmos.

The absence of a causal story about how the cosmos comes to resemble being may give heart to those who would take the cosmology to be a fiction: if there is no account of how the cosmos derives being from what really is, perhaps there is no reason to think that the cosmos has any degree or manner of being. Instead, one might think that Parmenides has described a cosmos that resembles being and accommodates our appearances, and so offers a degree of intelligibility, but there is no reason to ascribe any reality to the object of this story. However, as I argued earlier, the signs on the way of Truth are not just criteria of intelligibility. Since what is there for thinking is also there for being, and what is there for thinking is measured by the extent to which it matches the signs, it is reasonable to say that the cosmos in so far as it matches these signs also possesses a degree of being. The fictional reading seems to stumble, then, on the match between intelligibility and reality on which Parmenides insists.

Proclus chose to quote Parmenides as saying the same thing as Plato at a particular point in his commentary, the point (29 B–C) where Timaeus presents the world as a generated likeness of an

81 I am grateful to an anonymous reader for stressing this option.
Parmenides’ Likely Story

eternal model, and where he explains the sort of cosmology we may accordingly aim for. He does not quote Parmenides B 1 at the earlier stage (27 D–28 B) at which Timaeus simply contrasted being with becoming tout court, assigning knowledge to the first and mere belief with irrational perception to the second. If the argument of this paper is right, Proclus chose the opportune moment for the quotation: for Parmenides too saw the cosmos as intelligible in the measure that it resembles being, and he set his cosmology the task of showing just this likeness. That Proclus overstated the point—Plato went important steps further in explaining how the likeness came about—should not distract us from the insight that Parmenides laid the foundations, not just for Plato’s metaphysics, but also for his cosmology.

Brasenose College, Oxford

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Coxon, A. H., The Fragments of Parmenides [Fragments], rev. edn. (Las Vegas, 2009).


Hippias is a fool. Few readers of the Hippias Major have doubted this, but equally few have fully appreciated what kind of fool Hippias is. Since the publication of Paul Woodruff’s translation and commentary on the dialogue,¹ three major interpretative issues have been bound up with how one understands the presentation of the character of Hippias: (1) the justification for the dialogue’s comedy; (2) the purpose of Socrates’ absent questioner device; and (3) the authenticity of the dialogue. (1) Woodruff justifies the comedy of the dialogue as an appropriate attack on Hippias’ foolish character;² (2) he explains Socrates’ absent questioner device in terms of Hippias’ refusal to disagree openly, the latter’s ‘philosophy of agreement’;³ and (3) he denies that Hippias is presented as stupid in order to block a core argument against the dialogue’s authenticity.⁴ The central aim of this paper is to provide an interpretative framework for understanding the dialogue’s comedy.

¹ P. Woodruff (trans. and comm.), Plato: Hippias Major [Hippias] (Indianapolis, 1982). Woodruff’s ground-breaking work is the only one to give extensive treatment to Hippias’ character, and I will use his book as a touchstone throughout.
² See e.g. Woodruff, Hippias, 108–9, 131–2.
³ Ibid. 107–8, 128–9.
in general and presentation of Hippias in particular. In short, I provide an analysis of Plato’s portrayal of Hippias as a comic impostor, or *alazōn*, and this account has implications both for the three interpretative issues and for the philosophical significance of the dialogue as a whole.

Through my analysis, I show that the comedy centrally involves an appropriate attack on Hippias, and I aim to provide both a literary framework and a philosophical explanation for the attack. Drawing on Aristophanic Old Comedy, I provide in Section 1 an account of the general features of the literary figure of the impostor and argue that Hippias is presented as a comic impostor in the dialogue. Central to Plato’s use of this device is the self-ignorance of the impostor: Hippias thinks that he knows what the fine is and that he is fine, but he is wrong on both counts. In Section 2 I turn to Hippias’ moral character and attempt to diagnose the philosophical source of Hippias’ self-ignorance—and of his appearing but not actually being fine—by examining two instructive mistakes he makes about the fine: he makes fineness perceiver-relative, and he thinks that fineness has to do fundamentally with causing pleasure. For all of Hippias’ pleasantness and aesthetic fineness, he lacks what would make him genuinely fine, virtue, and his belief in his own wisdom and fineness makes him ridiculous and a fool. In my view, the purpose of the presentation of Hippias as laughable is not merely to expose his fatuous self-ignorance, but, in doing so, to warn readers not to make the same mistakes and become ridiculous themselves.

In Section 3 I turn to the use of the absent questioner device and situate it within the dialogue’s comedy to show that its central goal, from Plato’s perspective, is the exposure of Hippias as an impostor for the dialogue’s audience. Thus, it is meant to elicit audience rejection of Hippias and is further aimed at bringing out an important methodological disagreement between Hippias and Socrates about the relationship between discourse, refutation, and ridiculousness. For Socrates, I think that the absent questioner device is, as Woodruff argues, a dialectical strategy for circumventing Hippias’ refusal to disagree openly. Building on this point, I argue that since philosophical conversation aimed at the truth is arguably Hippias’ only path to virtue—that is, genuine fineness—Socrates’ use of the device may be said to have the purpose of moral improvement.

In Section 4 I broach the question of authenticity: I argue that it is not stupidity that explains Hippias’ various failures, but a blind-
ness born out of a central character flaw, self-ignorance. The ridiculous blindness of Hippias is crucial to the dialogue’s comedic unity and to its consistency with other Socratic dialogues, such as the *Ion*. Thus, if my analysis of the presentation of Hippias’ character is correct, doubts about the authenticity of the *Hippias Major* that arise from its comedic content should be put to rest.

In the end I hope to provide a unified account of the dialogue’s comedy that provides philosophically grounded reasons to do what the impostor motif invites us to do, namely, reject Hippias as a moral exemplar. On my reading, though the dialogue is, in the end, aporetic and its argumentation *ad hominem*, the dialogue makes real and quite general progress both in exposing two sorts of error about the fine and in defending a philosophical methodology that appropriately aims at what is genuinely fine.

1. The literary character of Hippias: comic impostor

In *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, Francis Cornford defines comic impostors, standard figures in Old Comedy, as ‘impudent and absurd pretenders . . . [who] put up a claim to share in the advantages and delights which they have done nothing to deserve’. The impostor is usually either a professional type or well-known public figure who enjoys a measure of status in the community—politicians such as Creon, to be sure, but also poets such as Euripides and intellectuals such as Socrates. In the typical impostor scene, the hero engages

---

5 F. M. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* [Origin] (New York, 1934; repr. 1961), 122. See also O. Ribbeck, *Alazon: Ein Beitrag zur antiken Ethologie* (Leipzig, 1882); D. M. MacDowell, ‘The Meaning of ἀλαζων’ [‘Meaning’], in E. M. Craik (ed.), *Owls to Athens: Essays on Classical Subjects Presented to Sir Kenneth Dover* (Oxford, 1990), 287–92; J. Diggle (ed., trans., and comm.), *Theophrastus: Characters* [Characters] (Cambridge, 2004). MacDowell surveys the uses of ἀλαζων in 5th- and 4th-cent. writers and concludes that ‘an ἀλαζων in Old Comedy is a man who holds an official position or professes expertise which, he claims, makes him superior to other men; he exploits it, normally in speech, to obtain profit, power, or reputation; but what he says is actually false or useless’ (‘Meaning’, 289). Diggle also distinguishes between the 5th-cent. and 4th-cent. versions of the ἀλαζων: the former is a ‘charlatan’ or ‘impostor’ who ‘claims superior knowledge or skill and exploits that claim for self-serving ends’, in particular monetary gain; the latter is more straightforwardly a self-glorifying boaster with no further goal in mind (Characters, 431). Cf. Arist. *NE* 1108b20–2, 1127b13–b32; *EE* 1221b24–5; Theophr. *Char.* 23. One finds a definition in [Plato], *Def.* 416a 10–11: ‘Being an impostor is the state of pretending to a good or some goods which do not belong to him’ (ἀλαζονεία ἕξις προσποιητικὴ ἄγαθον ἢ ἄγαθῶν τῶν μὴ ὑπαρχόντων).

the impostor in an ironical or abusive manner before dismissing him, nearly always with a beating. In Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* we see, for example, two informers turn up at the comic hero’s newly opened marketplace only to be beaten away with a leather strap—the second one, Nicarchus, is, in addition, wrapped up and sold to the Theban (818–28, 908–58). So too in the *Birds*, a whole series of impostors (a priest, a poet, an oracle-monger, Meton, the famous mathematician, an inspector, and a decree-seller) show up at Peisetaerus’ sacrifice (862–1057), and Peisetaerus, having treated all of them with irony and contempt, sends them away, beating all but the priest and poet. This general figure of the impostor has a professorial variety, of which Socrates in the *Clouds* is a prime example, that has three basic features: the professorial impostor (1) professes to have expertise; (2) exploits this alleged expertise for personal gain; (3) is exposed as useless or a fraud. This exposure is usually carried out by the comic hero, who takes on the role of an ironist, or *eirōn*, and feigns good will and stupidity while indulging and subtly undermining the impostor for the audience’s enjoyment; the hero then usually drops the façade and gives the impostor a well-earned beating.7

Though this account of the impostor is grounded in Old Comedy, it seems plausible as a description of Plato’s presentation of certain authority figures in general and the sophists in particular. Plato’s criticisms of comedy are, of course, well known from the *Republic*, *Laws*, and elsewhere, so one might be sceptical of the very idea that Plato is employing comic techniques at all. However, some scholars have found resources in the *Philebus* for understanding what a defensible practice of comedy might look like: Socrates defines *geloion*, the ‘laughable’, as a lack of self-knowledge, most commonly instantiated as a pretension to virtue and wisdom (48 e–49 c).8 This definition is at least amenable to the comic practice of portraying

---

7 For an account of the different impostor types see Cornford, *Origin*, 134–46; what I call the professorial variety closely resembles Cornford’s ‘Learned Doctor’ (*Origin*, 136–41) and is also influenced by MacDowell, ‘Meaning’, 289 (quoted above). The impostor can either be a minor figure, as in the examples above, or the main comic antagonist, such as Socrates in the *Clouds* or Creon in the *Knights*.

The Character of Hippias in the Hippias Major

certain characters as impostors. Though the comic impostor’s real epistemic condition is perhaps not at issue in Old Comedy, one would hardly be surprised to find that Plato’s version is centrally concerned with it. Thus, if Hippias really is a self-ignorant pretender to wisdom, he will, by this standard, be both laughable and the proper subject for a comedy, and Plato will be justified in having Socrates expose his self-ignorance, or beat him away with the stick of reason.

The portrayal of Hippias clearly bears the three hallmarks of the impostor: first, he surely professes to have expertise, both implicitly at first and prodded by Socrates’ praise (e.g. 281 a–b, 281 c–d, 283 c), and explicitly and with more force as the dialogue progresses (e.g. 286 e, 287 b, 287 e, 289 d–e, 300 c, 301 b–c; esp. 301 d, 304 a–b). Hippias prides himself on having several areas of expertise: politics and foreign affairs (281 a–d); astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, syntax, and musical harmony (285 b–d); and rhetoric and prose rhythms (286 a–c). In addition, he possesses an art of memory, whereby he can manage to remember stories from ancient history and divine genealogies (285 d–286 a). He is, in short, a polymath, but, in line with the other major sophists, his central area of expertise is supposed to be virtue, such that he can educate others, especially young men, making them virtuous (283 c–284 a, 286 a–c). Hippias agrees that his ‘wisdom [is] . . . the sort that makes those who study and learn it stronger in virtue’ (283 c 3–4) and that he ‘know[s] most finely of men how to pass virtue on to other people’ (284 a 2–3). In addition to all this, he seems to think that he is an expert on discourse (301 d) and cannot be refuted. His belief in his own wisdom makes him predictably arrogant: Hippias emphasizes the ease of Socrates’ question about fineness and expresses confidence about his ability to answer it on multiple occasions (286 e, 287 b, 287 e, 289 d, 291 d, 295 a, 297 e); he insults the absent questioner (288 d, 289 e, 290 e, 291 a) and openly attempts to make the latter seem laughable by his responses (288 b, 289 d–e, 290 a, 291 e–292 a, 304 a). With all of this arrogance and alleged wisdom of apparently boundless scope (301 b–c), Hippias might just be the perfect comic impostor.

Second, Hippias clearly uses this alleged expertise for his own

---

9 Cf. Protagoras’ caustic aside at Prot. 318 e; Xen. Mem. 4. 4. 6.
10 All translations are from Woodruff, Hippias, with some emendations.
11 Cf. Hippias Minor, where Hippias claims ‘never to have met anyone superior to
personal benefit: it is emphasized many times at the beginning how wealthy Hippias has made himself as a result of his knowledge (281 B, 282 B–283 B, 283 D, 284 A–C, 285 B, 300 D). Further, Hippias’ wealth and ability to make money are something of which he seems boastful and particularly proud (282 D–E, 284 C), and he clearly revels in the applause he generates and the fame he enjoys (284 C, 286 A–C). At the end, Hippias formulates the benefit of his skills in terms of acquiring conventional goods: the ‘greatest of prizes’ from speaking is the ‘preservation of yourself, your property, and your friends’ (304 A 6–B 3).

The last criterion is that Hippias’ expertise is exposed as fake or useless. Socrates, as ironist, draws Hippias out through ironic praise, sets himself up as ignorant or stupid, and, through the vehicle of the absent questioner strategy (see Section 3 below), consistently frustrates Hippias’ attempts to answer what the latter takes to be an easy question (286 E 5–287 A 1), namely, ‘what is the fine?’ Socrates exposes Hippias as an impostor. While Socrates plays the dupe, the absent questioner openly laughs at Hippias (291 E 6–7). In terms of the comedy, Hippias deserves a beating, and that is exactly what he gets. Indeed, Socrates claims that the questioner would justifiably beat him with a stick for repeating one of Hippias’ proposed definitions; Hippias is understandably shocked, but he does not reflect on the implications for himself (292 A–B).

This analysis of Hippias makes him into a token of an impostor type, but I want to emphasize that this is not inconsistent with the character of Hippias having distinctive features within that type. 

[him] in anything’ (364 A 8–9) and proclaims himself ‘wisest in the greatest number of crafts’ (368 B 2–3).

12 Though there is much dispute about the significance of Socrates’ use of irony, my aims here are rather narrowly focused on the figure of the ironist as he relates to an impostor, and I will not discuss the larger questions. Regarding the irony of Socrates’ claims or statements, I think the safest, most conservative position on the extent of Socrates’ use of irony would acknowledge that his expressed praise of his interlocutors as already wise is ironic, at least in the sense of ‘not seriously meant’. See G. Vlastos, ‘Socratic Irony’, Classical Quarterly, NS 37 (1987), 79–96; id., Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher (Ithaca, NY, 1991), 21–44; I. Vasiliou, ‘Conditional Irony in the Socratic Dialogues’, Classical Quarterly, NS 49 (1999), 450–72.


14 Since the vast majority of our information about the historical Hippias comes from Plato’s two dialogues, I am bracketing questions about the historical Hippias
It seems clear that Plato thinks that sophists form a kind or type and that they all share the features of the professorial impostor; and yet he characterizes them differently (cf. the differences between Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus in the *Protagoras*). It seems important in this dialogue that Hippias’ alleged wisdom is highly broad and general and that Hippias is visually impressive. These are specific features of Hippias that find a place in the larger construct of the professorial impostor. The dialogue focuses on one especially crucial and philosophically significant aspect of Hippias’ self-ignorance: he thinks he knows what the fine is, but he does not; and, on this basis, he thinks that he is himself fine, though he is not. If this is right, then Hippias is a particular kind of fool, a self-ignorant one, and, for all his technical knowledge—and there is no reason to deny him this—he is still a laughable figure fit for ridicule.

Of course, if the dialogue’s entire aim were merely to mock and humiliate Hippias—if this were only comedy—it would make for a philosophically uninteresting dialogue. Rather, through the character of Hippias, Plato aims to expose for his readers two particularly pernicious and common mistakes or confusions about the fine that Hippias both makes and embodies. This is one crucial way in which Plato’s comedy goes beyond Old Comedy: whereas the latter’s use of the impostor device may be, in certain prominent cases, seriously concerned with exposing public figures as frauds and the historicity of Plato’s portrayal. On the historical Hippias see W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, iii. *The Fifth Century Enlightenment [Fifth Century]* (Cambridge, 1969), 280–5; Woodruff, *Hippias*, 123–5; D. Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics [People]* (Indianapolis, 2002), s.n. ‘Hippias of Elis’. Xenophon refers to Hippias in Xen. *Symp*. 4. 62, and a fragment from Proclus (B 21 DK) attributes the discovery of a curve for trisecting an angle to Hippias. This latter piece of evidence is less certain: Nails takes it to refer to our Hippias, but *OCD*, s.n. ‘Hippias (3)’, claims that it is a mistake to understand the fragment as referring to Hippias of Elis.

15 Kahn, ‘Beautiful’, 272, cannot understand what purpose Plato could have in portraying Hippias with such animosity, since he would be ‘safely dead, or at least extremely aged’ by the time of composition. Surely Plato’s portrayal of sophists and other opponents of philosophy is not primarily to undermine those 5th-cent. contemporaries of Socrates, but rather to reveal for his 4th-cent. audience the errors of those 5th-cent. figures.

16 Cf. Woodruff, *Hippias*, 131–2; Kahn, ‘Beautiful’, 272. I hope, in what follows, to provide a more specific ‘philosophical motivation’ for the attack on Hippias than what Woodruff provides. Though my account is consistent with the five general reasons he gives for an attack on Hippias, I focus on two importantly mistaken claims that Hippias endorses in the dialogue.

17 I have in mind here Aristophanes’ targeting of, for example, Creon and Soc-
Franco V. Trivigno

and warning the audience about them, it is not so concerned with diagnosing the source of the figure’s foolishness or in general with the moral character of the fool. In short, Plato puts a device from Old Comedy to properly philosophical use, and in Section 3 I will highlight two interesting ways in which Plato adapts Old Comedy to his purposes.

2. The moral character of Hippias: self-ignorant fool

In this section I want to diagnose the philosophical source of Hippias’ self-ignorance by showing how his apparent fineness—his seeming to be fine—is grounded in at least two significant mistakes he makes about the fine. I first formulate three senses in which the dialogue portrays Hippias as apparently fine, and then I examine Hippias’ responses in discussing two of the proposed definitions of the fine: ‘the appropriate’ (293E7) and ‘pleasure . . . through sight and hearing’ (297E5–7). I argue that Hippias endorses an aesthetic, or perceiver-relative, conception of fineness, and he wrongly thinks that fineness has to do with causing pleasure. If he is right about the fine, then he is himself a fine human being, but the dialogue reveals him to be deeply and importantly wrong about the fine and thus about himself. In short, Hippias’ apparent fineness is no accident—it is rather expressive of his commitments, and it is these commitments that cause him to be a self-ignorant fool.

2.1. Hippias’ apparent fineness

Hippias is apparently fine in at least three senses. First, he has a fine appearance: that is, he is outwardly or visually fine. He is

rates, but many impostor scenes target professional types, and the humour in such cases may be grounded in a more general populist anti-intellectualism rather than reflecting any serious ethical concern about those types.

One might be inclined to object on methodological grounds to my appeal to Hippias’ responses in defending what are, after all, Socrates’ own suggestions; why, the objection might go, should we not take Hippias’ own answers as more indicative of his beliefs and character? First, the discussions of the first set of definitions seem focused more on making progress in understanding the principles of definition and thus are more formal and less philosophically robust in content. Second, it is a part of my view (which I will defend in the next section) that Hippias becomes gradually more forthcoming through the course of the dialogue, such that his later answers are in fact more important for understanding his real commitments.
described as ‘finely dressed and finely shod’ (291 Α 6–7). As in a certain contemporary aesthetic of ostentatious displays of wealth, Hippias makes himself appear fine by wearing expensive and fashionable clothing. Contrast this with Socrates, who is famous for rarely bathing, not wearing shoes, and in general having a shabby appearance.

Second, Hippias seems to speak finely or well (καλῶς); that is, he makes fine-seeming speeches. In boasting about his speech about fine customs and practices, Hippias emphasizes that ‘the speech is very beautifully composed [παγκάλως λόγος συγκείμενος]’ and ‘the words are arranged finely [εὖ διακείμενος καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασι]’ (286 Α 5–6). In short, what makes the speech fine is not the fineness of the practices and activities he describes—not the content—but the formal qualities of the speech. Indeed, in the course of the dialogue Socrates at least thrice responds to Hippias’ affected manner of speaking with praise for the latter’s fineness of expression (282 Β 1, 287 Β 4, 300 Α 4). But the aim of all these fine expressions seems to be nothing more than the acquisition of conventional goods (304 Α–Β).

We might contrast the superficial fineness and vulgar aims of Hippias’ speeches with the famous superficial vulgarity and fine aims of Socratic enquiry.

Last, Hippias seems to be a fine human being. Given his allegedly wide-ranging wisdom and his worldly success—his wealth, fame, and influence—he seems himself to be a fine human being, who is able to make others fine as well. This is how he presents himself to others, and it is likely that they accept this appearance. Indeed,

19 In Hippias Minor we hear that Hippias once arrived at the Dionysia in clothes and shoes of his own making, and ‘what seemed to everyone most unusual and an exhibition of the greatest wisdom was the belt [he] wore around [his] tunic, which resembled those very expensive Persian ones and [which he] claimed to have plaited [himself]’ (368 Β 3–7). Socrates speaks of this event as though it were widely known because of Hippias’ boasting, and it is against this backdrop that we might understand Hippias’ reply that gold is that which when added makes everything else fine.

20 On Socrates’ dress, washing habits, and generally unappealing appearance see Sym. 174 Α 3–5, 215 Β 4–6, 220 Α 5–C 1; Theaet. 143 Ε 7–9; Xen. Symp. 4, 19, 5, 5–7; Mem. 1, 6, 2; and Ar. Clouds 102–4, 302–3, 835–7; Birds 1282, 1553–5. See modern discussions in Guthrie, Fifth Century, 386–90, and T. C. Brickhouse and N. Smith, Socrates on Trial (Princeton, 1989), 13–15, 22.

21 Cf. the complaints of Callicles (Gorg. 491 Α) and Alcibiades (Sym. 221 Ε) that Socrates is always talking about ordinary matters. The length of the Hippian speech should also be contrasted with the brevity of Socratic question and answer: indeed, Hippias complains that Socrates’ absent questioner is just giving ‘flakings and clipplings of speeches . . . dividing up small’; echoing Callicles in the Gorgias, Hippias advises Socrates to ‘give up and abandon all that small-talking’ (304 Α 5–6, Β 4).
according to Hippias’ own account of the fine life for a human being, he has its three core elements: wealth, health, and honour (291 d–e).

If I am right that Hippias is presented as an impostor, then we are to think that his seeming to be fine is illusory and his self-understanding as fine is misguided. But how are we to avoid Hippias’ fate? The answer lies in avoiding the mistaken beliefs about the fine that Hippias endorses.

2.2. Being and appearing fine

Consider Hippias’ views as they emerge in the discussion of the appropriate as what the fine is. Socrates asks, ‘What do we say about the appropriate: is it what makes—by coming to be present—each thing to which it is present appear fine or be fine [φαίνεσθαι καλὰ . . . ἢ . . . εἶναι] or neither?’ (293 Β 11–294 Α 2). There is a sense in which this question is at the heart of the entire dialogue—it is located right in the middle and forms the core of the disagreement between Socrates and Hippias. It is, perhaps most importantly, a difficult philosophical question in its own right, one that may be the source of much confusion. Socrates asks the question in order to draw attention to the gap between the appearance and reality of fineness, and to allow Hippias to reveal his own commitment to appearing fine.

Hippias chooses ‘appear fine’ in order to fill out the account of the appropriate, and he gives the following example: ‘when someone puts on clothes and shoes that suit him, even if he’s ridiculous [γελόιος], he appears finer’ (294 Α 3–5). 22 Socrates formulates two basic objections to this response: first, even in Hippias’ own example, the appearance of the fine involves deception, since one appears finer than one really is (294 Α 7, 294 Β 6–7). Second, and more basically, Hippias, by choosing ‘appear fine’, is now answering an essentially different question. Socrates points out that they are looking for ‘that by which all fine things are fine’ (294 Β 1). He uses the case of largeness to show that the appearance is, strictly speaking, irrelevant:

22 Given that Hippias understands the definition of the fine as the appropriate in terms of appearance here, it is hardly right to say, as commentators often do, that he himself suggested it earlier in the dialogue (290 D 5–6). In that case, he clearly implicitly intended the appearance-based conception he openly endorses here, and this is obviously not what Socrates has in mind when he mentions the ‘nature of the appropriate’ (293 Ε 4–5). See H. Olson, ‘Socrates ‘Talks to Himself in Plato’s Hippias Major’ [‘Talks to Himself’], Ancient Philosophy, 20 (2000), 265–87 at 275, and my discussion in sect. 4 below.
For example, what all large things are large by is the exceeding. For by that all large things are large, and even if they do not appear so, if they exceed, they are necessarily large. Similarly, we say the fine is what all fine things are fine by whether or not they appear fine. (294 B 2–5)

Faced with this response, Hippias attempts to close the gap between appearing and being fine by positing the appropriate as the common cause of both: ‘the appropriate makes things both be fine and appear fine, when it is present’ (294 C 3–4). It is not immediately clear what Hippias thinks this clarification means for the relationship between being and appearing fine or how it solves the problem of deceptiveness. Perhaps Hippias takes his claim to imply that something is fine if it appears fine, that is, to license inferences from the appearance of fineness to its reality. Though this inference is not logically entailed by Hippias’ claim, it would obviate the problem of deceptiveness, and indeed would make the identification of fine people a relatively straightforward matter—whoever appears fine is fine.

Socrates does not pursue the problem of deceptiveness and rather focuses on whether Hippias’ assertion licenses the inference in the other direction, i.e. implies that something appears fine if it is fine. Nor is this inference entailed by Hippias’ initial claim, but Hippias nevertheless agrees that ‘it [is] impossible [ἀδύνατον] that what really is fine should not appear to be fine when what makes it appear [fine] is present’ (294 C 5–6). The assertion is not obviously wrong, and this can easily be seen by translating kalos as ‘beautiful’—what is appropriate makes things beautiful, and if something is beautiful, it appears beautiful. This is an instructive mistake, since it precisely calls attention to an ambiguity in kalos and an ensuing problem for someone who takes it in a visual or aesthetic manner: she cannot see the gap between being and appearing fine. Indeed, Hippias may be seen to overlook the gap when, earlier in the dialogue, he is to give an account of the fine ‘that will never appear φανεῖται foul anywhere to anyone’ (291 D 3) and what he offers is an account of ‘what is [εἶναι] always finest everywhere for everyone’ (291 D 10). Bracketing the move from foul to fine, the shift in formulation from appearing to being suggests that Hippias does not clearly mark the difference between such expressions.23 In order to correct for this, Socrates

---

23 If I am right, then it seems that Hippias wrongly understands the datives in the two phrases—‘to anyone’ (μηδενί) and ‘for everyone’ (πανί) —to play identical referential roles in their respective sentences. However, it would be more natural to take the second dative as one of advantage, and this grammatical point reflects the phi-
adduces the counter-examples of ‘fine customs and practices’ (καλὰ καὶ νόμιμα καὶ ἐπιτηδεύματα), which do not inevitably appear to be fine always and to everybody (294 c 8–d 3). This moves the level of discussion to examples of moral improvement that resist an aesthetic interpretation.\(^{24}\) Such an example is clearly fair game since Hippias has recently given a speech about the ‘fine practices’ (ἐπιτηδευμάτων καλῶν, 286 a 3–4; cf. 286 b 1) and ‘very fine customs’ (νόμιμα . . . πάγκαλα, 286 b 3–4) that Nestor recommended to Neo-ptolemus, though it is certainly revealing that Hippias praised that speech mainly for its aesthetic qualities (286 a 5–6).

Further, Socrates brings out more clearly that appearing fine is always appearing fine to someone. There is always a relevant audience, and this is congenial to the views of an impressive performer such as Hippias. Again, translating kalos as ‘beautiful’ reveals why Hippias’ emphasis on appearance, along with the attendant need for an audience, is not obviously wrong: one might think that beauty requires an audience. One might even think, along these lines, that the perception of beauty is what grounds knowledge of beauty. However, as Socrates shows, what causes something to appear fine and what causes something to be fine are different (294 d 7–e 4). This is at least in part because appearing fine is always indexed to an audience’s perception, while being fine is grounded in the intrinsic qualities of the object and independent of anyone’s perception. This is not to deny that the fine may be relational in the way that appropriateness is relational: it may be fine for a virtuous person to receive praise and fine for a vicious one to receive punishment. Rather, it is to underscore that, like largeness, fineness may be relational and indeed depend on some extrinsic factors, and yet not be subjective or perceiver-relative. Of course, it may be that Socrates thinks that being fine causes things to appear fine only to those with knowledge, such that being fine may play a causal role in some cases of appearing fine and certain informed perceivers may set the standard for philosophical point that the first formulation places humans in the role of determiners of what is fine, whereas the second make the fine something independently beneficial for humans. Hippias thus misses one of the core implications of the difference between expressions about what seems fine and what is fine.

\(^{24}\) Cf. Sym. 210 c 3–4, where ‘laws and practices’ that aim at moral improvement are the next step in the ladder of love. Diotima says that, at this stage, one thinks that ‘the beauty of bodies is a thing of little importance’ (210 c 5–6). The range of things that are described as fine is also an issue in Phaedo 100 d 4–6, where participation in the Form is invoked to explain all cases.
The Character of Hippias in the Hippias Major

in the rest of us. This is to ground the perception of fineness in the knowledge of fineness.

In sum, thinking of to kalon in an aesthetic manner leads one to overlook the gap between appearing and being fine and to make fineness itself audience- or perceiver-relative. But Hippias has trouble seeing his mistakes. Even after Socrates’ not so subtle hint to re-examine his initial response, Hippias still clings to apparent fineness as decisive for the appropriate, and is puzzled that this wrecks the argument (294E). Hippias still wants to answer a different question, the one he really cares about, what it is to appear fine. He holds on, I suggest, because the aesthetic picture and its attendant claims express his core commitments, and indeed are a source for his self-esteem. If Hippias is right in not seeing a gap between looking and sounding, i.e. appearing, fine and being fine, then he is also right to think that he is a fine human being. On Hippias’ view, it seems that, if you want to know whether someone is fine or not, you can tell by looking at them to see if they have the outward marks of fineness—good looks, nice clothes, gold jewellery, etc. If you want to know whether what someone says is fine, you have to listen to the rhetorical flourish of the composition. In sum, the visual and auditory fineness of Hippias—not the content of his character or of the speeches—is what marks him as fine. He knows this, or so he thinks, because the audience tells him he is fine and they are, in the end, the standard for measuring fineness. Of course, Hippias is completely wrong about the fine and thus about himself: indeed, it is not hard to see Hippias’ example of the ridiculous man in fine clothes as unintentionally self-referential.

2.3. Pleasure and the fine

Socrates’ final suggestion, that the fine is what causes visual and auditory pleasure, comes rather abruptly:\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{25} The definition is unexpected, both because it does not come as a result of the previous failures in the way that the second set of proposed definitions seems to do and because we would not expect Socrates to endorse such a view. It is equally puzzling that Socrates proceeds to dismiss the suggestion with an obvious counter-example, and then goes on to explore it anyway. Why he does this is a difficult question that I do not have space to pursue here. I suspect that this comes in response to some view at the time about the connection between pleasure and the fine, and Plato wants to show the real problems with taking pleasure as a whole (open to counter-example) or taking some kinds of pleasure (both open to counter-example and failing a unity criterion for definition) as what the fine is or consists in. Cf. H. Tarrant, “The
ὁρα γάρ· εἴ δ ἂν χαίρειν ἠμᾶς ποιῇ, μήτι πάσας τὰς ἡδονάς, ἀλλ’ δ ἂν διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς καὶ τῆς ὄψεως, τοῦτο φαῖμεν εἶναι καλόν, πῶς τι ἄρ ἂν ἀγωνιζοίμεθα;

Look here. If we were to call fine whatever makes us feel good—not all the pleasures, but those through hearing and sight—how do you think we would do in the contest?

In my view, Socrates’ raising the suggestion serves to give some content to what Hippias himself thinks is so fine about his appearance and speeches. In short, they give the audience pleasure, and (Hippias might think) what could be finer than that? Socrates elaborates on the suggestion with the following observation: ‘Humans, when they’re fine anyway—and everything decorative, pictures and sculptures—these all delight us when we see them, if they’re fine. Fine sounds and music altogether, and speeches and storytelling, have the same effect’ (298a 1–5). This description is both meant to subtly mock Hippias—he is such a pretty man and a pleasing storyteller—and to appeal to his aesthetic view of the fine. Hippias previously missed the insulting implications of Socrates’ comparison to an old lady because it made him ‘tell stories for pleasure’ (286a 1–2), and he is presumably happy to be described as one who gives pleasure.26 It is unsurprising, then, that Hippias reacts with such enthusiasm to Socrates’ definition of the fine in terms of pleasure: ‘This time, Socrates, I think what the fine is has been well said’ (298a 9–b 1). The core claim, ‘something is fine if and only if it causes visual and auditory pleasure’, not only furthers previous discussion in foregrounding the audience’s role in determining fineness, but also provides a causal story about the criteria by which the audience judges—its own pleasure.27 In short, appearing fine to others and causing others pleasure are related in that one appears fine to others when one causes them to experience visual and auditory pleasure. Socrates may also be drawing out an implicit

Hippias Major and Socratic Theories of Pleasure’ ['Pleasure'], in P. Vander Waerdt (ed.), The Socratic Movement (Ithaca, NY, 1994), 107–26, who argues that the real problem is the restriction of pleasures and that Plato is trying to get his readers to see that the fine and the pleasant are identical.

26 Contrast Woodruff, Hippias, ad loc., who thinks that Hippias merely ignores the insult.

27 Cf. Arist. Top. 146e 21 ff., in which a very similar kind of definition is given and refuted, though Aristotle substitutes a disjunction for the conjunction. Even Kahn, 'Beautiful', 271–2, admits that this echo of the dialogue is a difficult piece of evidence for the athetizers to explain away.
connection between the aesthetic conception of fineness and a hedonistic theory of value. For it is clear from the previous definitions that Hippias thinks of the fine quite generally in aesthetic terms, and from this last definition, that he understands these aesthetic terms by reference to pleasure. A hedonistic theory of value seems to be a good theoretical fit for the aesthetic conception of fineness, and if Socrates thinks that thinking of the fine in aesthetic terms—a tempting but ultimately misguided thought—will lead one to endorse hedonism, that would make this kind of view an important target for Socrates.

Socrates immediately undermines the definition on the grounds that it cannot account for ‘fine practices and laws’ (τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα τὰ καλὰ καὶ τοὺς νόμους, 298 B 2–3), again invoking the content of Hippias’ speech to the Spartans as a counter-example. It is worth dwelling for a moment on the fineness of laws and practices and their relationship to pleasure. Hippias readily agrees that what makes fine laws and practices fine is not that they are pleasant through sight and hearing. He may only mean that the laws, unlike his speeches, are not composed in an aesthetically pleasing manner and thus would not make for a pleasant performance. But there are also substantive reasons for Socrates to doubt this suggestion. An alternative account was presented earlier in the dialogue: in the discussion of the Spartans, law was described as being beneficial to the city (284 c–d) through the promotion of the goodness, or virtue, of its citizens (283 e–284 a). The law might be thought to bring about the virtue of its citizens, at least in part, through pain. For example, in the Gorgias Socrates describes good political rhetoric as aiming at promoting virtue and being indifferent to whether it causes the audience pleasure or pain (503 a–b), and in the Laws the Athenian describes the cultivation of virtue as the training of pleasure and pain (653 a–d). In addition, the punishments prescribed by the laws will inevitably cause pain. Socrates does seem to think that there is a sense in which the laws might be described as pleasant through sight and hearing (298 d 1–3), and we might speculate that they could be pleasant reading or hearing for a virtuous man who appreciates living under good laws and recognizes that the laws are fine.

Note the shift from νόμιμα to νόμους, bringing the discussion more directly in line with the Symposium.

Woodruff, Hippias, ad loc., n. 150, rightly defends the οὐκ against Stallbaum’s
In terms of Hippias’ apparent fineness, it is clear that the last definition of fineness in terms of pleasure is congenial to Hippias’ self-understanding as fine. He wholeheartedly endorses it because if fineness is to be understood in terms of pleasure, then it is clear that the pleasant-looking and -sounding Hippias is a fine human being. But the dialogue makes it perfectly clear that he is not a fine human being.

2.4. Hippias’ moral character

So far I have traced a connection between Hippias’ views about appearing fine and about causing pleasure and Hippias’ self-ignorance. In short, Hippias is self-ignorant at least in part because he holds these views. A further upshot of my account is that it can explain several puzzling features of Hippias’ character. In the light of his commitments, one can see why he thinks that a fine girl (287 E 4) and gold (289 E 3) are appropriate answers. Both appear or look fine, and each, in their own way, gives pleasure. Further, we can see why his attempts at definition are, from a purely formal perspective, so poor: Hippias is not looking to give true, but rather impressive, fine-seeming, and pleasure-giving answers. In addition, one can explain his striking claim to have learnt the ‘genealogies of heroes and men’ and ‘all of ancient history’ in order to please his Spartan audience. In short, he sees wisdom only as instrumental to appearing fine and giving pleasure to an audience.

Regarding Hippias’ motivation for appearing fine to and pleasing his audience, we need not speculate. As he tells Socrates, ‘what’s fine and worth a lot [is] to be able to present a speech well and finely, in court or council or any other authority to which you give the speech, to convince them and go home carrying not the smallest but the greatest of prizes, the preservation of yourself, your property, and your friends’ (304 A 6–B 3). In the case of his speech about fine practices and activities, it is decidedly not its effectiveness in educating its audience about virtue that makes the speech fine. Indeed, there is good reason to think that Nestor’s speech was not fine in the sense of beneficial either, since Neoptolemus was, at least on some prominent accounts, brutal in the aftermath of Trojan war, killing Priam at the altar of Zeus and casting Astyanax, the infant son of Hector, down from the city walls. For sources see OCD, s.v. ‘Neoptolemus’; for the most hostile portrayal see Virg. Aen. 2. 525–8.
rather his ability to gain profit from it. This is not surprising, given Hippias’ list of the constituents of the eudaimōn life: ‘to be rich, healthy, and honoured by the Greeks, to arrive at old age, to make a fine memorial to his parents when they die, and to have a fine grand burial from his own children’ (291D 10–E 2). What is strikingly absent from this picture of the good life is any mention of wisdom or virtue.

The dialogue does not give us an answer to the question of what the fine is, but I would suggest that the most promising possibility defines it in terms of the good, and, despite the problems raised for that suggestion, that it is the connection of fineness to goodness that cannot be accommodated by any of the other definitions. This connection is just what one would need to account for fine practices and laws. At least in the Republic, Plato insists that the only standard and measure of what is kalos is the good and that any other standard is foolish (452E). Hippias appears fine to the ignorant many and gives them great pleasure, both in his visual presentation and in his speeches. But by the standard of real fineness or goodness, he is a mere impostor. He understands looks, money, political influence, and power as the marks of human fineness, and so takes himself to be a fine human being. But about this he is deeply wrong. He does not know what the fine is, even though this knowledge is necessary for understanding whether he himself, or anything else, is fine (304D–E).31 In line with other Socratic dialogues in which knowledge of virtue is necessary to being virtuous, Socrates seems to assume that it is a necessary condition of being fine that one should know what fineness is. By this standard, Hippias clearly fails.

In sum, Hippias looks and sounds like a fine and good human being, but he is not. He is then wrong about himself—self-ignorant—and thus ridiculous. This ignorance is the morally blameworthy kind that Socrates describes in the Apology; what makes it even worse in Hippias’ case is that he goes around unwittingly inflicting moral harm on others. If I am right that Hippias’ foolishness is ultimately expressive of his commitments, then he may serve as a cautionary tale for Plato’s readers, not only about the possible errors one might make in thinking about the fine, but also about the possibility that making these mistakes will turn one into a fool. At

31 I will not here take up the issue of whether and to what extent this articulation of the priority of definition is, in Kahn’s words, ‘extreme’, or whether it fits with the way such priority is characterized in other definitional dialogues (‘Beautiful’, 273–5).
the end of the dialogue, Socrates again invokes the moral content of Hippias’ speech and, with unmistakable irony, describes Hippias as ‘blessed’ (μακάριος) because he ‘know[es] what a man should practise [ἃ χρὴ ἐπιτηδεύειν ἄνθρωπον] and [has] done so successfully’ (304 B 7–9). Hippias still thinks that it is the absent questioner who is foolish and babbling nonsense (304 A–B), but the comedy’s audience knows who the real fool is.

3. The absent questioner device

In this section I want to situate Socrates’ use of the absent questioner within the comedic framework of exposing Hippias as a charlatan or impostor—that is, of showing him to be ridiculous. In order to understand the significance of the absent questioner device, it is crucial to distinguish Plato’s aims as author and Socrates’ aims as philosophical interlocutor. Put differently, one must distinguish between the literary and dialectical intentions of the absent questioner device. In my view, the central goal of the device from Plato’s perspective is the exposure for his audience of the literary character Hippias as an impostor. We are meant not only to reject Hippias as a ridiculous impostor along with his views about the fine, but also to reject his understanding of ridiculousness and the methodological assumptions that underpin it. In short, Hippias thinks that to appear ridiculous to the many just is to be ridiculous. This is grounded in his commitment to agreement, or his strategy of agreement, which conceives of refutation in terms of denying ‘what everyone accepts’. This strategy is, in turn, motivated by what Hippias takes to be the proper aims of discourse, namely, the acquisition of goods for oneself and one’s friends, which is best

32 D. Tarrant, ‘The Authorship of the Hippias Major’, Classical Quarterly, 21 (1927), 82–7; Tarrant, Hippias Major, xiii, thinks the device is unparalleled in Plato, and that this provides grounds for regarding the dialogue as spurious. Others have seen parallels to other dialogues (e.g. Grube, ‘Authenticity’; Olson, ‘Talks to Himself’). It seems to me that Socrates is quite often appealing to absent interlocutors, both named and unnamed. To be sure, nowhere else is Socrates himself that absent interlocutor, but the uniqueness of having the personified Laws in the Crito or of having Socrates recite a speech by Aspasia in the Menexenus does not provide a reason for athetizing those dialogues. Further, in the Theaetetus Socrates seems to regard thinking as silent self-dialogue (189 ε). Woodruff, Hippias, 286 c ad loc., is surely right that the uniqueness of the absent questioner makes it ‘least likely to have been supplied by an imitator of Plato’. Cf. Guthrie, Earlier Period, 176.

33 See Woodruff, Hippias, 125.
accomplished by pandering. Because of this competing standard of ridiculousness Hippias, in my view, remains blissfully unaware that he is being shown to be ridiculous on any level.\textsuperscript{34} From Socrates’ perspective, the absent questioner device is a dialectical strategy for provoking Hippias out of his strategy of agreement. If truth is the only thing worth caring about, as Socrates claims (288d 4–5), then getting Hippias to engage in philosophical conversation aimed at the truth might be his only path towards virtue. If that is so, then the central goal of the device from Socrates’ perspective is the moral improvement of Hippias. That the conversation confuses and disorients Hippias, undermines his self-confidence, and causes him pain and discomfort is just what one expects from a Socratic refutation.

3.1. Exposing Hippias

If I am right that Plato has cast Hippias in the role of impostor, then the absent questioner device is a very clever vehicle for carrying out the comedic plot: Socrates, as ironist, manages to make himself seem like a buffoon, while subtly mocking Hippias with ironic praise for the benefit of the audience, and as the absent questioner, he delivers the intellectual beating. I am by no means suggesting that the absent questioner device is \textit{necessary} to carrying out the exposure of the impostor. Indeed, Plato has Socrates employ the one-two punch of ironic praise and devastating refutation in a number of dialogues. However, Socrates is nowhere \textit{in propria persona} as rough and merciless as he is, as the absent questioner, with Hippias. Had Socrates been overtly abusive with Hippias, it is unlikely that Hippias would have stuck around to endure it. In short, the device, along with the healthy dose of praise, keeps Hippias coming back for more. Plato does depart somewhat from the generic expectations of the typical impostor scene in Old Comedy, since the beating usually marks the impostor’s departure, in the case of minor figures, or his final defeat, in the case of comic antagonists, but Plato’s innovation serves a crucial philosophical purpose. Only by keeping Hippias around do we get to see Socrates expose and refute Hippias’ position in detail and thereby to learn the appropriate philosophical lesson.

\textsuperscript{34} Woodruff, \textit{Hippias}, 108, thinks Hippias understands that the absent questioner is Socrates all along. See my discussion below in sect. 4.
Franco V. Trivigno

Thus, Socrates manages to seem to Hippias to be hapless and hopeless, incapable of answering simple questions and generally epistemically inept. Socrates emphasizes his own ignorance and incompetence on several occasions, most forcefully at the beginning and end (286c–e, 304c–e). He praises Hippias, ironically to be sure, as almost godlike in wisdom. Yet at the same time Socrates, as the absent questioner, makes clear arguments, articulates decisive objections, and in general shows that Hippias cannot formulate, much less defend, his answers. Hippias is consistently flummoxed by the questioner and shows no awareness of the ruse. The whole set-up is, in short, designed to expose Hippias as ignorant, self-ignorant, and ridiculous. Despite protesting that the question about fineness is easy and that he is an expert on discourse, he is exposed as a fraud who is convinced by his own appearance.

These features all seem perfectly in line with other Old Comedy-inspired dialogues that make use of the impostor motif, such as the Ion, Euthydemus, and Euthyphro: in each case Socrates presents himself as a student in need of instruction from an expert only to succeed in undermining the relevant impostor’s claim to expertise. The innovation of the Hippias Major is the use of the absent questioner to pull off the double role of purported student and elenchic master. It is a special case of a broader phenomenon in Plato, what Thrasymachus scornfully called Socrates’ ‘habitual irony’ (Rep. 337a 4). One might be inclined to object here that Plato, writing in the fourth century, could not have had any interest in exposing the dead sophist Hippias. However, just as in the above-named dialogues, it is not the dead titular figures that Plato aims at undermining but the modern equivalents, who make similar philosophical mistakes and might seem to others (including themselves) to be epistemic and/or moral authorities. By making Hippias seem ridiculous, Plato is thus warning his readers of the dangers of Hippian views about fineness.

3.2. Refutation, ridiculousness, and the proper aims of discourse

Socrates first asks for Hippias’ help regarding what the fine is so that, in his next conversation with the questioner, he ‘won’t be made a laughing stock [γέλωτα] again for having been refuted [ἐξελεγχθείς] a second time’ (286e 2). Both Socrates and Hippias seem to agree that there is a connection between ridiculousness and refutation,
but they conceive of the relationship in entirely different ways. For Socrates, being refuted reveals that one is ridiculous in the sense of lacking self-knowledge—one thinks one knows something but does not. For Hippias, being refuted makes one appear ridiculous to the onlookers. For Socrates, then, refutation tracks truth (at least) in that it reveals a real state of a person and is possibly beneficial—perhaps even fine—both for the person refuted, since being exposed as an impostor might lead to a measure of (Socratic) self-knowledge, and for the onlookers, warning them not to be taken in by the alleged expert. For Hippias, being refuted makes one appear ridiculous, and nothing good can come of that. There are two passages that bring out this difference.

First, when Hippias offers a fine girl as his first definition, something he claims will never be refuted, Socrates is understandably not impressed (288 α–β). Hippias thinks it impossible that he will be refuted since he ‘says what everyone thinks’, and anyone who tries to refute that will make himself a laughing stock (288 Α 3–5, 288 Β 1–3). Thus, Hippias thinks that the absent questioner, in challenging what everyone thinks, will be refuted and appear ridiculous.

Second, when Hippias lists the constituents of the good, or εὐδαιμονία, life as what the fine is, Socrates claims that, in response, the absent questioner will laugh at (καταγελάσεται) both Socrates and Hippias. Hippias’ mocking reply is instructive:

πονηρόν γ’, ὦ Σώκρατε, γέλωτα· ὅταν γὰρ πρὸς ταῦτα ἔχῃ μὲν μηδὲν ὅτι λέγῃ, γελᾷ δὲ, αὐτοῦ καταγελάσεται καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν παρόντων αὐτὸς ἔσται καταγέλαστος. (291 Ε 8–292 Α 1)

Useless laughter, Socrates! When he has nothing to say in reply, but laughs anyway, he will be laughing at himself and he’ll be a laughing stock to those around.

Note that Hippias again attaches being ridiculous to appearing ridiculous to the onlookers, whereas it seems clear that the absent questioner’s laughter is directed at Hippias’ confident assertion of a clearly false and eminently refutable answer.35

Hippias and Socrates disagree about who is truly ridiculous

---

35 The answer is obviously poor for a number of reasons, both as an account of the fine and as an account of the good life, or εὐδαιμονία: first, regarding the fine, it is open to counter-example, as Socrates shows; second, it is paratactic, containing only a list of constituents of the good life with no order or τέλος (and thus fails both as a definition of anything and as an account of εὐδαιμονία); third, it contains the wrong constituents and lacks the right ones.
because they disagree about the rules and aims of discourse—in short, about what constitutes a refutation and about why speaking is valuable. In line with his strategy of agreement, Hippias reveals that he avoids refutation and gains assent by ‘saying what everyone thinks’, since ‘everyone who hears you will testify that you’re right’ (288 A 3–5). On this picture, one is refuted (and therefore ridiculous) when one flouts common opinion. Regarding the aims of discourse, for Hippias the aim is the ‘preservation of yourself, your property, and your friends’ (304 A 6–B 3); that is, one should strive for this, or ‘be thought to be a complete moron for applying [oneself] . . . to babbling nonsense’ (304 B 5–6). Thus, Hippias exploits common opinion via his strategy of agreement in order to attain conventional goods for himself. He is, in terms of the Gorgias, a flatterer, who panders to the audience for personal gain.

The absent questioner also allows Socrates to set up his own alternative: refutation is understood in terms of undermining the cogency and consistency of the opponent’s answers and reducing him to aporia (see 293 C, 297 D). The absent questioner and Socrates ‘care only about the truth’ (288 D 4–5). For them, there seem to be two kinds of standard for refutation: an internal one, in that the dialectical questions are normative for what kinds of answer would be acceptable (289 C); and an external one, in that the ultimate standard is independent of any speakers or speaker conventions, namely the truth. When the absent questioner claims that Hippias’ final attempt at a definition of the fine is ‘even more ridiculous’ than the others, he is measuring their ridiculousness against these standards, and the fact that they might garner widespread agreement and enable one to win conventional prizes is completely irrelevant. Indeed, far from caring about conventional goods, it seems that asking these ‘babbling’ questions of Socrates just is aiming at the appropriate good, namely wisdom. Despite Hippias’ over-confidence in his own speaking abilities (‘I know how everybody who’s involved in speeches operates!’), 301 D 2–3), he cannot answer Socrates’ questions because he is unused to and not interested in philosophical analysis aimed at the truth.

Using the device of the absent questioner, Plato aims to get his
readers to see the stark contrast between what is really ridiculous, namely the self-ignorant pandering of the impostor or alazōn, and what only seems ridiculous, namely disagreeing with the many; and to see that conventional aims of the former are really ridiculous, while the aim of philosophical discourse, truth, which may seem ridiculous, is the only aim worth having. Indeed, it would represent the only way for Hippias to become truly fine. This analysis suggests another way in which Plato moves beyond Old Comedy: Plato seems to have a principled position on what it means to be ridiculous and whom it is appropriate to portray as ridiculous, whereas Old Comedy seems not to be constrained by any such scruple. In short, Plato’s use of the impostor device is meant to track the truth (and not the appearances).

3.3. Socratic moral improvement

If I am right about Plato’s aims in using the absent questioner device, this does not—indeed cannot—answer questions about Socrates’ aims, which must be local to the dialogical context. In other dialogues in which Socrates exposes sophists and there is an audience of young men, e.g. Protagoras, Euthydemus, and Hippias Minor, Socrates surely has the aim—parallel to Plato’s—of exposing the sophists as impostors for the local audience. However, there is no mention of such an audience in the Hippias Major, and it seems plausible to think that Socrates and Hippias are alone. The absence of such an audience is interesting, in part because it forces us to look for an alternative explanation. In the present case, it cannot be ruled out that Socrates is merely having a bit of fun for his own personal amusement, but if we can find an alternative, more serious aim, this would be preferable as an interpretation.

I think Woodruff is right to say that Socrates uses the device to overcome the strategy of agreement. This is an important insight, which shows that Socrates is not merely mocking Hippias: he is also trying to get Hippias to make proper assertions about the fine and to subject those assertions to philosophical evaluation. It is only by seeking a true account of the fine that Hippias has any hope of becoming a fine human being.

If Hippias is consistently affable in his conversation with Socrates, he is increasingly annoyed by the absent questioner and his refutations. Socrates allows Hippias to think that they are united
Franco V. Trivigno

against the absent questioner: ‘I’ll be acting out his part—so the words I use are not directed against you; they’re like what he says to me, harsh and grotesque’ (292 c 3–5). But this is just Socrates’ way of circumventing the agreement strategy, and it is, in my view, successful. Hippias grows increasingly assertive throughout the dialogue, especially after 301 c, and in discussing the final suggestion Hippias begins to adopt positions that seem to be his own and not merely an attempt at saying what everyone would agree to or articulating the views of ‘ordinary people’—see Socrates’ overt comment to that effect at 299 a–b. This must all be understood against the background of having the right sort of conversational aims. It is not assertiveness per se that is the goal, but honest and forthright participation, what Vlastos calls the ‘saying what you believe’ criterion.37 By making Hippias take a stand, he gets him, even if briefly, to participate in a properly aimed conversation, and doing so brings him slightly closer to the truth about the fine. Hippias needs, in short, to make proper assertions, as opposed to dressing up conventional wisdom in beautifully turned phrases. To make proper assertions involves taking responsibility for the claims under discussion and putting oneself to the test (cf. Prot. 347 c–348 b). A proper assertion, then, is one that (1) aims at the truth, (2) expresses the views of the agent, and (3) can be tested. Someone who is merely giving others’ opinions would seem to immunize herself from refutation since the view under consideration was never hers to begin with. So making proper assertions is a first step towards evaluating those assertions and is thus necessary to developing true views about the fine and becoming a fine person.

Despite his self-confidence, Hippias also seems to have wrong views about the fine and other matters, so Socrates does not merely want him to participate honestly and forthrightly, he also wants to refute Hippias and show him that he lacks the knowledge he thinks he has. As Socrates famously says in the Apology, the allegedly wise men he interviewed all seemed both to themselves and to others to have wisdom, but they all failed to withstand Socratic scrutiny

They were, in short, *alazon*es, or impostors. By getting Hippias to make proper assertions, he opens him up to the possibility of refutation—of being reduced to a painful and disorienting *aporia*—and thus to realizing his own ignorance and seeing himself as an imposter. This explains Hippias’ irritation towards the end of the dialogue. He puts himself on the line and is embarrassed by the absent questioner. But this is not to cause psychic pain for its own sake; rather, by showing Hippias he lacks the knowledge he thinks he has, Socrates is attempting to help him. He tries to save him from what Socrates calls ‘blameworthy ignorance’ in the *Apology* (29 a–b) and thus to motivate engagement in philosophical conversation aimed at the truth about moral matters such as the nature of the fine. So Socrates is, in a sense, mocking and embarrassing Hippias, but his doing so has the aim of moral improvement. If self-knowledge is a minimal condition of being a fine human being, then Socrates’ painful exposure of Hippias can be said to attempt to bring him closer to actually being fine. But Socrates’ success with Hippias may be seen as only partial and fleeting at best. While Hippias does admit to being perplexed and disoriented by the argument, he does not take this to mean that he cannot answer the question (see esp. 297 e 1–2). In short, while he recognizes his failure in the argument, he does not recognize his epistemic failure, i.e. his ignorance. Thus, Hippias’ continuing self-ignorance prevents him from ever pursuing, much less attaining, the knowledge of the fine that is (at least) a necessary condition of being a fine human being.

If my analysis of Socratic moral improvement is on target, then it brings out a further methodological point of disagreement with Hippias: if Hippias employs a strategy of agreement which causes others pleasure for his own benefit, Socrates might be said to employ a strategy of disagreement—the elenchus—which causes others pain for their own benefit. This contrast is reminiscent of the one Socrates draws in the *Gorgias* between what the orators actually do, viz. saying what will gratify the citizens for their own personal profit, and what the orators should do, viz. saying what is best even if it will be painful, in order to make the citizens morally.

---

39 One might wonder how single-minded concern for the truth is compatible with ironic praise and self-deprecation. A short response might be to see the latter pair as strategies for attaining the truth and for enabling an arrogant and self-ignorant interlocutor to attain truth. Cf. Olson, ‘Talks to Himself’, 271–2.
better (502 D–503 D; cf. 513 E–514 A); it is in these latter terms that Socrates describes his own ‘political art’ (521 D–E). One might be further reminded of the Platonic theory of punishment, which makes ‘pain and suffering’ necessary for moral reform (Gorg. 525 B–C).

4. The authenticity of the *Hippias Major*

In this section I consider the implications of my analysis of Hippias as an impostor for the question of the dialogue’s authenticity. The portrayal and harsh treatment of Hippias have been a central cause for doubting Plato’s authorship of the dialogue since the nineteenth century, when Schleiermacher counted these features as reason for scepticism, and Ast first decisively declared the work to be spurious. A main complaint against the dialogue is that it is too ‘sharply comic’ for Plato, perhaps a bit too indebted to Old Comedy, and a core aspect of this complaint concerns the characterization of Hippias: he is both ‘mercilessly ridiculed’ as stupid and inconsistently characterized in that, despite his stupidity, he makes

---


41 There are several other issues that bear on the question of authenticity, and I will be setting these aside in order to focus on Hippias’ character. For an overview of the issues as they currently stand see Woodruff, *Hippias*, 94–103; Kahn, ‘Beautiful’. Some of these issues—whether Plato would devote two dialogues to Hippias, whether Aristotle acknowledges the *Hippias Major* (or not), what the doctrinal commitments of the dialogue are, and what parallels to other passages tell us about the composition date of the dialogue—are not relevant to my analysis. However, as Woodruff rightly notes, the various objections to the style of the piece as un-Platonic—the harsh portrayal of Hippias, the high frequency of puns, and the unusually poetic diction—are not fully independent of one another, since ‘they are all aspects of the same central oddity of the *Hippias Major*—that it holds the person of Socrates’ interlocutor up to uniquely sharp ridicule’ (*Hippias*, 99–100). My argument can be seen as lending indirect support to those who see many of the linguistic oddities of the dialogue as parodying Hippias’ overwrought style. It is worth noting that stylometric analysis of the dialogue provides no evidence against Plato’s authorship.

42 In the nineteenth century opinion was severely divided on the matter. The early twentieth century had some prominent athetizers, e.g. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Platon*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1919), and Tarrant, *Hippias Major*, but the tide has now clearly shifted in favour of authenticity, with supporters including Grube, ‘Authenticity’, E. R. Dodds (ed. and comm.), *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1959), Guthrie, *Earlier Period*, and Woodruff, *Hippias*. Nevertheless, the issue remains unresolved, as there are still prominent athetizers, such as H. Thesleff, ‘The Date of the Pseudo-Platonic *Hippias Major*’, *Arctos*, 10 (1976), 105–17, Kahn, ‘Beautiful’, and Nails, *People*. 
The Character of Hippias in the Hippias Major

‘first-rate suggestions’. In the most recent iteration of this debate, Woodruff defends the characterization of Hippias by affirming that the latter ‘is not represented in the dialogue as a stupid man, but as one who is clever in a misguided, non-philosophical way’. This move takes the edge off the ridicule by making the portrayal of Hippias seem more balanced, and it removes the inconsistency—since Hippias is not, in the end, stupid, there is nothing problematic in the fact that he makes first-rate suggestions. In order to save Hippias from being stupid, Woodruff claims that Hippias (1) understands Socrates’ irony at the beginning of the dialogue; (2) understands but tries to dodge Socrates’ question about the fine; and (3) understands that the absent questioner really is Socrates. Kahn, the most prominent current athetizer, seems sceptical about these moves, attributing them to Woodruff’s ‘spirit of charity’ and ‘hermeneutical generosity’. I think Kahn is right to be sceptical, but for the wrong reasons—not because Hippias is ‘stupid’ after all. My aim in this section is to drive a wedge between stupidity and foolishness, and to show that it is the self-ignorant foolishness of Hippias that makes him blind. It is this blindness, and not stupidity, that explains Hippias’ various failures.

First, Woodruff claims that Hippias understands that Socrates is being ironic at the beginning of the dialogue on the grounds that ‘no one could be so stupid’ as to miss it. I think that questions of stupidity are beside the point—what is relevant is that Hippias thinks himself wise when he is not, and thus is willing to take the bait and endorse the praise he has received (cf. 285b 3–4, when Hippias says, ‘I grant that. I think you said your say on my behalf, and there’s no need for me to oppose you’). This is essential to the comedy of the dialogue—if Hippias were actually aware of Socrates’ irony, it would undermine the effect of revealing Hippias’ self-ignorance. Further, the use of ironic praise is also consistent with Socrates’ practice in other dialogues: he frequently heaps ironic praise on his interlocutors. Kahn, ‘Beautiful’, 264.

Woodruff, Hippias, 97. 44 Woodruff, Hippias, 129.

43 Woodruff, Hippias, 97. 44 Ibid. 45 Kahn, ‘Beautiful’, 264.
47 Woodruff, Hippias, 94, rightly considers Hippias Major to have ‘as good a claim to Platonic authorship as do the Ion and Euthyphro’, but by making Hippias clever in the way he does, he undermines the parallels with the impostors of those dialogues and thus weakens the case for authenticity.
praise on those who already think themselves wise, and sometimes lays it on pretty thick (cf. the \textit{Ion}).\footnote{Woodruff, \textit{Hippias}, 129, asserts that Hippias is familiar with Socrates and his ways, but I do not think the passage he cites (301 b) shows anything more than that Hippias thinks that the technique of question and answer breaks up matters and that both Socrates and the absent questioner engage in that kind of discourse; in short, this could easily be something Hippias garners from the conversation they are in. Indeed, a point is made of Hippias’ unfamiliarity with Athens (202 a–b) and infrequent visits (281 a–b).} It is rare for an interlocutor to understand what is happening—most interlocutors happily accept the praise. Thrasymachus, who clearly does understand the irony of the praise, scornfully rejects it (\textit{Rep.} 337 a).

Second, Woodruff asserts that Hippias does in fact understand but is trying to dodge Socrates’ question about what the fine is; again, this is in part to save Hippias from being portrayed as unduly stupid. Hippias is, on this account, fully aware of what Socrates is after, but refuses to play the game, knowing it will only end in defeat.\footnote{Woodruff, \textit{Hippias}, 109, 129–30.} In my view Hippias cannot answer Socrates’ question because he is not interested in or used to philosophical analysis. He is not interested in philosophical analysis because he thinks himself wise: that is, he is self-ignorant. He is certainly not portrayed here as subtly aware of his inability to answer Socrates’ questions: he openly scorns the question as ‘not worth a thing’, and is so confident that his answer will be proof against refutation that he is willing to stake his reputation on it (286 e 5–6, 286 e 8–287 a 1). It is a commonplace in the dialogues that interlocutors fail to understand how to answer Socrates’ definitional question, and the \textit{Hippias Major} would be unique if it portrayed an interlocutor who understood but dodged the question. Rather, it is characteristic that the self-ignorant interlocutor answers confidently. So I think Woodruff’s line would create a problem for authenticity rather than solving one.

Third, Woodruff claims that Hippias understands that the absent questioner is really just Socrates ‘from the very start’, again to save him from stupidity.\footnote{Woodruff, \textit{Hippias}, 108. Cf. Tarrant, ‘Pleasure’, 110: he thinks Woodruff’s position would implausibly ‘make Hippias one of the most perceptive of Socrates’ sophistic interlocutors’.} But Hippias gives no indication that this is so, which Woodruff himself acknowledges. Instead, he attributes Hippias’ playing along to Hippias’ strategy of agreement: ‘the device is in his interest’\footnote{Woodruff, \textit{Hippias}, 108.}. But this would let Hippias in on the joke, and it
is hard to see how the comedy of the dialogue works if Hippias is just playing along. The absent questioner device does, as Woodruff rightly points out, ‘make the humorous conflict of the [dialogue] possible’. If my earlier analysis of the device is on target, it plays a special role in exposing Hippias as self-ignorant and ridiculous, and his awareness of its workings would completely undermine that function. Even if I am mistaken, there is simply no positive evidence in the dialogue that Hippias gets it, even after Socrates gives it away (298 b 11); so at a minimum I think that granting such knowledge is unnecessarily speculative.

If I am right about Hippias’ foolish character, then I am arguably left with the difficulty that Hippias is inconsistently characterized because he makes some insightful suggestions about the fine. Woodruff deals with this point by downplaying the alleged stupidity of Hippias in the ways outlined above, thereby reducing the implausibility of his making good suggestions. I am more inclined to go in the other direction—I am not at all convinced that he makes first-rate suggestions. On examination, the two such suggestions that Woodruff attributes to Hippias (290 d 5, 296 d 4) do not turn out to be particularly impressive after all.

The stronger case for Hippias making a good suggestion comes at 290 d 5, where Hippias asserts, ‘whatever is appropriate to each thing makes that particular thing fine’. This appears to be identical to the absent questioner’s first attempted definition of the fine: ‘the appropriate itself, that is, the nature of the appropriate’ (293 e 4–5). But these are clearly not identical either verbally or substantively: Hippias takes ‘appropriate’ in both an aesthetic and a subjective sense, whereas the absent questioner emphasizes, by talking of ‘the nature of the appropriate’, that it is something stable, uniform, and objective that he means to suggest. Hippias’ suggestion is first-rate only in appearance, and this is perfectly clear from the ensuing discussion (see my analysis in Section 2.2 above), in which Hippias clearly has not understood, much less anticipated, the questioner’s suggestion.

The second allegedly first-rate suggestion comes somewhat later, after Socrates refutes the able and useful as the definition of the fine on the grounds that the able and useful is also able to do bad and make mistakes (296 a–d). Hippias defends the suggestion by restricting it: ‘It is [the fine], Socrates, if it’s able to do good, if

---

53 Ibid. 54 Ibid. 108–9.
it’s useful for that sort of thing’ (296 d 4). This is hardly a mind-
blowing insight—Socrates has just emphasized three times that the
problem with the definition on offer is that it includes the able and
useful for ‘doing bad’ (296 b 6, c 3, c 7); and even if Hippias could
not, on his own, see that the opposite of bad is good, Socrates him-
self puts the concept pair in front of him (296 c 3–4). This restric-
tion leads to (though it does not amount to) the definition of the
fine as ‘the beneficial’, and it is a move for which Socrates clearly
prepares Hippias. I would not deny that Hippias has some inchoate
philosophical insights and is able to make some basic inferences, but
this is hardly surprising—it does not seem possible from a Socratic
perspective to be completely wrong about everything.

In general, Woodruff claims that ‘it is a necessity of the comic
plot’ that Hippias cannot start out as a fool, but rather needs to
be made a fool by Socrates.\footnote{Ibid. 128.} Woodruff clarifies his point by dis-
tinguishing between ‘being a fool’ and ‘being made a fool’, liken-
ing the former to the clown whose mere presence is sufficient to
raise a laugh.\footnote{Ibid.} His worry then seems to be that, if Hippias is ig-
norant of Socrates’ irony, of how to answer Socrates’ question, and
of the absent questioner’s true identity, then he is just plain stupid
like the bumbling clown, and thus is a fool from the start. I think
Woodruff is right to say that the comedy requires that the target
be made a fool, as opposed to being a fool, in at least one sense,
but his strategy for establishing this dynamic is misguided. The
distinction between ‘being a fool’ and ‘being made a fool’ is am-
biguous. It can track one or several of the following distinctions:
(1) ‘always appearing foolish’ vs. ‘being made to appear foolish at
some point(s)’, (2) ‘being foolish on one’s own’ vs. ‘being made to
appear foolish by another’, or (3) ‘really being foolish’ vs. ‘being
made to appear (or exposed as) foolish’. The first concerns the tem-
porality of one’s appearing foolish, the second, the cause or source
of one’s appearing foolish, and the last, the real psychological state
of the fool. Woodruff seems to have the first two senses in mind:
if Hippias is like the clown, then he constantly appears foolish on
his own without ‘help’ from others, and this, I agree, would un-
dermine the comedy of the dialogue. My suggestion is that Hippias
is made a fool throughout the dialogue, but that he is not normally
considered to be one, and it is against the backdrop of his reputation
for wisdom that his being made to appear foolish by Socrates must

55 Ibid. 128. 56 Ibid.
be understood. This is what Ruby Blondell calls historical irony: the audience—the readers of the dialogue—knows that Socrates is dealing with a renowned, ‘impressive’, and seemingly all-knowing sophist. The comedy does not need to establish this by giving him serious lines or substantive suggestions. It rather takes the grand reputation of Hippias as a background assumption. Thus, we do not need to try to save Hippias from stupidity, as Woodruff does, in order to make sense of the comedy of the dialogue. Further, for my reading, the third distinction is the most important one, since Hippias’ self-ignorance—his really being a fool—is what explains his ignorance of Socrates’ irony, of how to answer Socrates’ question, and of the absent questioner’s true identity, and this is precisely what allows Socrates to make him appear to be a fool, i.e. to expose him as an impostor. Thus, the unity of the comedy depends on Hippias’ ignorance rather than being undermined by it.

If I am right, then questions about stupidity are not germane to the issue of authenticity, since the dialogue’s portrayal of Hippias is consistent and consistently comic. This consistency mirrors the Ion’s comic portrayal of the rhapsode Ion as a self-ignorant fool, and is firmly in line with Plato’s comic technique. Consider the parallels with the portrayal of Ion: like Hippias, Ion is a successful and self-important visitor who meets Socrates on his arrival in Athens; he seems very concerned with his appearance; he is praised for his skill, induced to boast about his achievements, accolades, and financial success; he is pressed by Socrates regarding the content of his performances and of his alleged expertise; and he is made to look extremely foolish by Socrates and exposed as an impostor. Both Ion and Hippias are considered skilled performers—the former has recently won first prize in a rhapsode contest—and both take themselves to be versed in a wide range of skills and to be knowledgeable quite generally. Further, both seem to rely on Homer and/or other epic poets when

58 Kahn admits that ‘this faithful and intelligent imitation’ could only have been written by an ‘intelligent student of Plato’s work’—someone like Vlastos—but nevertheless thinks that someone who takes the Hippias Major to be genuine ‘has no sense for the art of the greatest prose writer of antiquity’ (‘Beautiful’, 268). My claim, a much more modest one, is that those who take the dialogue to be spurious have no sense for the art of Plato’s comedy.
59 See Trivigno, ‘Technē’.

it comes to ethical and political matters. One core difference between them is that, while Ion’s only basis for taking himself to have practical expertise is his knowledge of Homer, Hippias seems to have some real independent knowledge. Never in the *Hippias Major* is Hippias’ knowledge of mathematics, harmonics, and astronomy questioned either explicitly or implicitly. On the basis of this fact alone, one may conclude that Hippias is not stupid, since he possesses knowledge, and in particular knowledge of fields that would seem to require some level of intelligence. But one cannot conclude from this that he is not a fool, since even a knowledgeable and intelligent person may also be self-ignorant. One might concede that Hippias is not a complete fool, since his lack of self-knowledge is restricted to ethical and political matters, unlike Ion, who thinks himself an expert in prophecy and generalship, for example, on the basis of having memorized Homer. Nevertheless, Hippias is a fool in the only way that really matters, since, like the craftsman in the *Apology*, he has real knowledge but makes the mistake of thinking that his knowledge in one area extends to knowledge of virtue; Ion’s case is arguably more like that of the poets, and if that is right, the differences between Ion and Hippias are less important than what they have in common:

[T]he good craftsmen seemed to me to have the same fault [ταύτον . . . ἁμάρτημα] as the poets: each of them, because of his success at his craft, thought himself very wise in other most important pursuits, and this error of theirs overshadowed the wisdom they had . . . (*Ap*. 22 D 5–E 1)

Both share ‘the same fault’: that is, they think that they possess, but actually lack, moral knowledge; in the end, moral knowledge is the only kind of knowledge that matters (304 D–E). Plato portrays both figures as self-ignorant impostors using techniques of characterization borrowed from Old Comedy. This core of moral self-ignorance is what constitutes their foolishness and makes them properly laughable and appropriate targets of Plato’s comedy.

---

60 Hippias’ speech on fine activities clearly relies on material from the epic poetic tradition, and if this speech, which he is to deliver again in Athens (286 B 4–7), is the speech that Socrates has just heard at the opening of the *Hippias Minor*, then Homer is the poet in question: see Woodruff, *Hippias*, ad loc.

61 Nor, indeed, is Hippias’ knowledge of such matters and other more practical skills, such as plaiting, shoemaking, and metalworking, questioned in the *Hippias Minor* (368 B–E).
The Character of Hippias in the Hippias Major

5. Conclusion

Hippias is a particular kind of fool—a self-ignorant one—and his consistent portrayal as a comic impostor, or alazōn, makes sense of several of the dialogue’s comedic features and undermines one argument against the authenticity of the Hippias Major. Through my analysis, I have argued that the dialogue aims to highlight two philosophically significant mistakes about the nature of the fine, and to defend Socratic methodology as the path to knowledge of what the fine is and to becoming genuinely fine. If one accepts my analysis, then one must accept that Plato used literary devices borrowed from comedy. I do not find this a particularly surprising conclusion in the light of Plato’s use of similarly comic characterization in dialogues such as Ion, Euthyphro, Protagoras, and Euthydemus, and his use of parody in dialogues such as Menexenus, Protagoras, and Phaedrus. If a dialogue’s employment of a comic device constituted a reason for athezing it, then we might have to eviscerate the Platonic corpus, and that would be a foolish thing to do.

University of Oslo

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Grote, G., Plato, and the Other Companions of Sokrates, vol. i (Cambridge, 1865; repr. 2010).


Woodruff, P. (trans. and comm.), *Plato: Hippias Major [Hippias]* (Indianapolis, 1982).
At the end of *Republic* book 3, when he has just finished describing the education that would produce fine young citizens suited to be Guardians of his ideal state, Socrates famously proposes that all the citizens should be taught a myth or story. They are to identify the earth as their mother, and to believe that, during their gestation within the womb of the earth, different kinds of metal accumulated in their souls, and that these metals are definitive of their future career and place in society.

We call this story ‘the Noble Lie’. ‘Noble’ translates *gennaios*, meaning ‘well-born’—perhaps because it is about nobility of birth, since all the citizens are nobly born, of the same mother, according to this story, but we shall also find reasons for seeing it as noble in another sense. ‘Lie’ translates *pseudos*, meaning ‘falsehood’. Perhaps ‘lie’ is an over-translation, since, as many have noted, not all falsehoods are lies. We could substitute ‘fiction’ or ‘pretence’ in place of ‘lie’. But regardless of which terms we use, the fact remains that Socrates suggests using falsehood and asks how we might get the citizens to believe a myth which, in some sense at least, is acknowledged to be untrue.

Two puzzles arise from the claim that the story is false. First, if it is *obviously* untrue, and everyone knows that, how can anyone come to believe it? And second, why should Socrates want his citizens to believe a falsehood, and run the state on that basis, instead of teaching them the truth? The provision of a founding lie and the requirement that the people be deceived about their own birth have
generated hostility among a wide spectrum of readers. Many readers have jumped to the conclusion that Plato’s aim was to conceal the natural equality of the people so that they could be allotted roles of unequal worth in the community. This makes the story a rather ignoble lie, designed to oppress rather than liberate the people of the ideal state.

My task in this paper is to show that Plato meant exactly the opposite. I shall argue that the Noble Lie is designed to ensure that the city and its citizens are lucidly aware of something that is important and true, and that it is designed to deliver greater fairness and equality of opportunity, to prevent prejudice or privilege arising from noble birth or wealth or any other unfair advantages, and to facilitate social mobility.

By juxtaposing the Myth of the Metals (Noble Lie) with another myth (the Cave) from later in the same work, I hope to make the point of the Noble Lie more evident. We shall also find that the puzzles about whether it is false, whether it is compatible with justice, and why the rulers would believe it, fall away. By taking a tour through the underground caverns of the Republic we shall emerge at the end with our eyes opened to the truth.

1. Birth and rebirth

The Noble Lie comes in two parts. The first is about autochthony (414D–E): it claims that people are gestated under the earth, and that the earth is their mother. The second is the Myth of the Metals (415A–C): it claims that god infuses a metal deposit into each soul during the gestation under the earth, different metals for different people.

The first point to note about the autochthony part is that it is evidently not about what we call birth. The citizens are not required to believe that they were earth-born as infants, but rather that they were born into adult citizenhood, at the end of their school education. This school-leaving event, presumably at the ephebic age of something like 18 or 20 (537B 1–C 3), was a kind of ‘birth from the earth’.


2 414D=E[T1]. Several previous scholars have observed (in a footnote) that this event must be or may be an event at the ephebic age (e.g. G. F. Hourani, ‘The Education of the Third Class in Plato’s Republic’ [‘Education’], Classical Quarterly, 43
period during which the child is reared by the state education system, which Socrates has just finished describing.

Here is what Socrates says:

[T1] I’ll try first to convince the rulers themselves and the military, and then the rest of the community, that all the nurture and education that we gave them seem like dreams [ὄνείρατα] that they experienced, or happened round them, when in truth at that time they were being moulded and nurtured deep under the ground . . . (Rep. 414 D 2–7)

The text continues, at 414 D–E, by explaining that the young people are ‘born’ fully equipped with armour and other paraphernalia:

[T2] . . . when in truth at that time they were being moulded and nurtured deep under the ground, both themselves and their armour and the rest of their manufactured equipment, and then when they were fully formed, the earth, who was their mother, brought them forth, so now . . . (Rep. 414 D 6–E 2)

This correctly follows the pattern of all ancient autochthony myths, which are invariably about adults springing from the ground fully grown and fully armed. It is doubtless because he is thinking of his citizens being ‘born’ when they are already trained and equipped that Socrates is prompted to invoke the Theban myth about the Phoenician king Cadmus, who sowed dragon’s teeth from which an army of soldiers sprang up. Socrates proposes that his future citizens should believe that they were ‘born’ when they were fully complete, with all their equipment provided, and that they should think that their education, which he has just described, was a special kind of gestation in the earth-womb, after which they were born into the open air and the light. So when the myth speaks of ‘birth’ it means graduating to become an adult citizen. We might say it is a motif of ‘rebirth’.

Nothing in what Socrates says suggests that the myth would be altered in any way, in its retelling for later generations. There is (1949), 58–60 at 60 n. 1; C. Page, ‘The Truth about Lies in Plato’s Republic’, Ancient Philosophy, 11 (1991), 1–33 at n. 21), but none—as far as I can discover—takes the idea seriously or considers what we should then conclude about the provision of universal education.

3 Evident in the reference to the story being ‘Phoenician’ and ‘not familiar in these parts’ (414 C; see [T1]).

4 I have not located any evidence of rebirth motifs in Greek ephebic rites, but it seems plausible that there might be some. For comparable material see H. Bloom (ed.), Rebirth and Renewal (New York, 2009).
no suggestion that it is to be changed so as to mean that the citizens are born from the earth as infants. On the contrary (as we shall see), the second part of the myth (the Myth of the Metals) indicates that it takes time for metals to be laid down in the soul. Since the children’s education is what deposits metals in their souls, and the story is about how we are to understand and respond to that educational effect, it makes sense that Socrates offers the myth as a conclusion to his books on education of the young.

Part of the point of the story is to explain how important it is for the rulers to look at the abilities (i.e. metals in the soul) of a young adult at the end of the education, and assign the citizen to the appropriate duties in life on that basis. Some translators make it seem as if children are classified in infancy, but there is no reference to ‘children’ in the Greek text. The term *ekgonos* does not mean a child: it just means a son or daughter. So there is no textual evidence for the idea that the ‘birth’ mentioned in the myth is the birth of infants, or that the requirement to judge the progeny by their metals involves judging children’s abilities in infancy or childhood. The story seems actually to recommend treating all children as indeterminate at birth and delaying the assignment of classes and roles until the age of majority, when it can be done fairly according to the capabilities manifested during a period of universal comprehensive education.

2. Dreaming

One key metaphor in the autochthony part of the story is that of a ‘dream’. As we saw in [T1] (repeated here as [T3]), all the citizens will think of their education as a sequence of dreams:

[T3] I’ll try first to convince the rulers themselves and the military, and then the rest of the community, that all the nurture and education that we gave them seem like dreams [ὀνείρατα] that they experienced, or happened round them, when in truth at that time they were being moulded and nurtured deep under the ground . . . (Rep. 414 D 2–7)

I think that many readers take this to mean that people are to be hoodwinked about the true nature of their upbringing, and persuaded that it was illusory. Instead, they will be made to think

---

5 ‘Offspring’ is the usual translation. I use ‘progeny’ in [T15].
6 See further below, sect. 7.4.
Philosopher Kings and the Noble Lie

something that is literally untrue—namely that, instead of the education that they actually had, they were in fact underground being moulded and gestated (πλαττόμενοι καὶ τρεφόμενοι). Since this is untrue, and surely they must know what kind of education they really had, this seems like deception or self-deception. Why would they believe it? They must be brainwashed, it seems, and having been brainwashed, they will no longer be lucidly aware of who they are or how they were educated.

That reading of the passage seems to me to be a total confusion. Here is a preferable alternative: Socrates explains that the young adults, emerging from a period of intense education for citizenship, now become lucidly aware of the true nature of their upbringing. So far from deceiving themselves into thinking that they were underground when they know full well that they were not, the best of them will come to realize—to discern in a fully rational way—that during their education they were in truth underground, and were in a dream.

The difference between awareness of reality and living in a dream is a recurrent theme throughout the Republic, not just here. In Republic book 5 the lovers of sights and sounds are said to be like those who dream because they think that the ‘many beautifuls’ are what the Beautiful is:

[T4] soc. A person who recognizes beautiful objects, but does not recognize beauty itself and can’t follow if someone tries to lead him to knowledge of it, does he seem to you to be living in a dream [ὄναρ] or in a lucid state [ὕπαρ]? Consider: isn’t the following what dreaming [ὁνειρώττειν] is, namely taking what is merely like something else to be, in reality, the very thing itself, and not just something that is

7 414 D 7. Cf. 415 A, where the same verb of moulding is used while the god is adding the metals to the stuff out of which he is making them, and cf. 377 A 11–B 2, where the verb is used of the formation of the young child in the nursery. For τρέφω of prenatal gestation see e.g. Aesch. Eum. 662 ff.

8 R. Wardy, ‘The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology; or, How to Assemble Awkward ‘Truth and Wholesome Falsehood’ [‘Ideology’], in V. Harte and M. Lane (eds.), Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy (Cambridge, 2013), 119–38 at 134, illustrates such a reading, despite observing the cross-reference to other dreaming–waking motifs.

9 ‘When they were at that time in truth underground’ (ἦσαν δὲ τότε τῇ ἀληθείᾳ υπὸ γῆς, 414 D 6) is usually taken to say that they are deceived about how things are in truth. But the particle δὲ is not answering to any μὲν clause, so there need be no implied contrast between what they think and what is real. We can read the sentence to mean that when they come to think that they were down under the earth in a dream, so indeed in truth they were actually down under the earth in a dream.
Catherine Rowett

like it—no matter whether they are awake [ἐγρηγορῶς] or asleep [ἐν ὑπνῷ] at the time?

GLAUCON. Certainly I would say that such a person is dreaming.

(Rep. 476 c 1–6)

[T₄] provides a definition: dreaming is taking for real something that is a mere image or likeness of the reality in question. Socrates contrasts the dreamer with one who knows of Beauty itself, and is aware of both it and its instantiations in ordinary things. This person (they agree) is lucid, not dreaming:

[T₅] soc. But the one who (by contrast with those people) thinks the Beautiful itself exists and can survey both it and the things that partake of it, and doesn’t think that the participants are it nor that it is its participants, do you think that person is in a lucid state or in a dream?

GLAUCON. Definitely lucid.

(Rep. 476 c 7–d 3)

To be lucid is to understand that the many beautiful things are like but not identical to the Beautiful itself. To be still in a dream world is to appreciate beautiful things while still unaware that there is something else that is more real.

Now, we must ask, which state were the young citizens in when they were undergoing the process of acculturation described in Republic 2 and 3? They were raised on good stories with fine moral examples—‘many beautiful things’—but without philosophy. They had no idea as yet that there was something else, such as the Beautiful itself. So according to the definition offered in [T₄], the junior citizens were in the state we call dreaming, unaware of the greater reality that is the Form itself.

It is only when they grow up—only then, if at all—that they achieve a lucid awareness that their training among the beautiful stories was all ‘in a dream’. In fact, it is the philosopher rulers above all who will see it in this way, since they are, perhaps, the only ones who will fully understand, because they will have a clearer grasp of how those beautiful things differ from the Beautiful itself, and will see their earlier experience as a dreamlike condition; whereas the ordinary citizens will never reach that level of philosophy so as to see this for themselves. The rulers above all will lucidly understand what it means to say that everything they have experienced so far took place underground, and that they were born only when they emerged from that underground womb.
We shall get a clearer picture of what I have in mind if we turn now to the famous motif of the Cave, where we meet the contrast between dreaming and waking again. There too, Socrates speaks of the underground experience as being a kind of dream.

3. Caves, wombs, lies

In Republic 6 and 7 Socrates attempts to picture the Form of the Good, and its relations to other Forms and to the sensible world, in a sequence of three images. The third of these (the Cave) describes an underground cavern in which prisoners are chained to watch shadows on the wall, and few, if any, ever escape to discover that what they had seen was not all that there is. The Cave is a large womblike underground chamber, with a long narrow passage or birth canal opening onto the light outside. While the chains by which they are fastened to their earthy womb are not explicitly compared to an umbilical cord, their effect is rather similar, such that the movements of the prisoners are restricted, and they cannot turn their heads or move their limbs much. They see only faint images lit by the red glow of an unseen fire. Thus they live until such time as some intellectually able soul is dragged out to the light, kicking and screaming.

The resemblance between this underground Cave and a womb is obvious; so we only have to imagine what the earth-womb of the Noble Lie must be like for the similarity between the two images to be apparent. The idea that the Cave is a womb already appears in Luce Irigaray’s reading in Speculum of the Other Woman, but whereas she focuses on the idea that it deceives and conceals, because she thinks that Plato is trying to eliminate any role for mothers in the ideal state, I do not see any negative view of the maternal role in either the Cave or the Noble Lie when they are read as images of gestation and birth, since both ascribe all the most important formative influences on the children’s upbringing to the feminine

---

10 See below, sect. 4 and [T6]. Socrates’ vocabulary at 520 c 6 (within [T6]) directly echoes the vocabulary of [T5].
11 Rep. 514 Α–520 Ε.
and to the in-womb experience. Even in the Cave, the transmission of shadows of the truth will become an invisible but omnipresent maternal cradle of sound values and beliefs, once the philosophers have returned to govern down there in the second part of that tale.\textsuperscript{13} Strangely, despite recognizing the Cave as an underground womb, Irigaray makes no connection with the Noble Lie.

The Cave has sometimes reminded people of the caves used for mystery rituals, or of the underworld in a \textit{katabasis} myth, but it is not actually a \textit{katabasis}: we do not first go down there and then come out; instead we come out and then go back. The Cave maps much better with the birth process: for just as we begin our lives in the womb, unaware that there is anything outside, so also the prisoners find themselves in the Cave, unaware of what is outside.\textsuperscript{14}

Obviously, in the Cave all children are born underground and spend their early lives there. Some Cave-dwellers will never come to realize that they were raised underground—not in the way that the philosophers realize that, once they escape from it. However, all of us can be taught a story about our gestation under the earth, or about our condition as Cave-dwellers. The first ones to understand lucidly what that means, and to recognize its truth on the basis of a true estimation of their early years, will evidently be the philosopher rulers themselves, since they are the first or only ones to escape from the Cave and realize that they had been raised underground during their youth. This gives us a clue as to how Socrates thinks that the rulers might themselves be persuaded to believe the falsehood that they are required to tell. The old problem about how to convince them falls away once we get them out of the Cave. Now the philosophers will understand and endorse the myth of the earth-

\textsuperscript{13} See further below, sect. 4. Irigaray perversely supposes that all the prisoners in the Cave are male, although Plato consistently speaks of them as \textit{ἄνθρωπος}, which is gender-neutral.

womb because of what they now know—not despite what they know. It is as if they use the Noble Lie like a ladder, which they need until they have climbed out of the Cave. Then they can kick it away, for they no longer need the falsehood; or rather, what had seemed like fiction when it was told as a myth to your younger innocent self, before you knew the truth about yourself and everyone else, turns out to be not mere fiction but rather a metaphor for the truth and a source of understanding, not a source of deception.

4. Birth and return

The womblike structure of the Cave is uncannily like the earth’s womb in the Noble Lie. However, there are some significant dissimilarities which need to be explored. First, whereas all the children leave the underground womb in the autochthony myth, by contrast only the few daring philosophical adventurers escape into the light from the Cave. Secondly, for those philosophical adventurers there is both an escape and then later a return, which does not obviously correspond to anything in the autochthony myth.

In fact, to be more precise, there are two bits about the philosopher’s return to the Cave. In the first Socrates narrates what happens when the first prisoner ever to escape returns to the Cave, having discovered a better world outside. Socrates describes how he returns incompetent, blind, failing in the shadow-competitions, and how he is ridiculed and killed for trying to set the others free (516 E–517 A). This passage imagines somewhere such as Athens, where philosophers do not rule, citizens are not taught philosophy, and anyone who tries to enlighten them will be rejected and executed. This and a similar passage at 517 D implicitly allude to historical events, such as Socrates’ struggles against injustice in Athens.

By contrast, at 519 C–520 D a very different situation is envisaged. We are not in the Athens of Socrates’ time, but in a wonderful city which is a community awake, not dreaming (even though it is still in the womb of the earth):

[T6] And thus for us and for you the community will be run in a condition of being awake [ὑπάρ]—not dreaming [ὄναρ] in the way that most com-

munities are run now, by people who shadow-box with each other, and vie with each other over taking the lead, as though that were an enormous guerdon. (*Rep. 520 c 6–d 2*)

Here the philosophers are required to return periodically, to govern an ideal community. This city is awake because the people in charge of it are no longer dreaming. Yet even there, everyone still starts life in the underground womb, facing the wall and watching a shadow-show. Nevertheless, the city is ‘awake’ or lucid, and even those who will never progress to pure intellectual studies will benefit, because they no longer live in a community that is confused and dreaming. Here, where philosophers bring wisdom and understanding to the task of governing, the people no longer box with mere shadows of justice, but with shadows that systematically and deliberately track the truth. These new shadows are carefully produced for them by thinkers who understand what justice really is.16

How will this be achieved? Presumably the returning philosophers will choose or create the models of justice and goodness for the underground society. Their shadow-plays will not be like ours, determined by the whims of journalists and advertisers with no interest in what is really good. Instead, their shadows will speak of justice as it really is, and of what is really good, albeit in stories and images. In the ideal state the puppets, at whose passing shadows the prisoners gaze, will be crafted by selfless philosophers who have seen the Forms and have returned to convey the truth in a way that the people can handle. The very decision to project shadows will have been taken by rulers who want the people to see things that resemble the truth. The education underground, in the Noble Lie, and in the second stage of the Cave, is an education in likenesses, in a dream world, but in both cases the likenesses are chosen for their goodness and for their formative effect on the childish soul. They are the best there is for the young and for those who cannot aspire to the heights of philosophical vision.

There is no comparable tale of a return to the womb in the Noble

16 For the equivalent task of overseeing the stories for those learning in the womb see 377 c 1–6 (the first task is oversight and critique of the myth-makers); 379 a (it is not the founders who make up the stories but the poets in the finished community). These points are made about the education of the young in the ideal city, but we now know that this education is informed by the knowledge of the expert philosophers who return to the Cave, and overseen by them (not, as at first, by the founders). There are further questions, for another paper, about where we might find such philosophically informed poetry in *Republic* 10.
Lie. But then that myth is, so to speak, confined to the underground part of the Cave myth. By book 3 we had not yet heard of the Forms, nor that philosophy is an escape into the light, nor that philosophers would be required to ensure that the education was based on the truth. All these things must be added in Republic 7, and much of this is added, it seems to me, in the icon of the Cave.

There is a more significant disanalogy in the fact that most of the prisoners stay underground for ever in the Cave, while in the autochthony myth everyone leaves the womb. The Myth of the Metals does acknowledge the difference between those who will and those who will not become philosophers, since that is what is meant by the presence of gold in the soul, but this does not determine whether you will get out of the womb, as it does in the Cave. So we have a similar motif designating two somewhat different rites of passage, one that is leaving school and entering adult citizenship (which happens to all) and one that is a birth into philosophical enlightenment (which happens to a few).

5. Delivery into the light

Are these resemblances between the two images just random, or did Plato see them and mean us to see them too? Here are some hints that he meant us to see them.

First, both texts are explicitly about education. The Noble Lie completes Socrates’ description of the education of the young (376 C–412 A), and of the need to select the ones suited to serving as Guardians and Auxiliaries (412 B–414 B). As we have seen, the story they must believe is about their education and nurture (the education just described in Republic 3). Birth from this womb comes at the end of all that. 17

Similarly, in Republic 7 Socrates explicitly claims that the Cave will represent our experiences with respect to education and the absence of education:

[T7] Next, I said, picture our condition [φύσιν] with respect to education and lack of education [παιδείας τε πέρι καὶ ἀπαιδευσίας], as like the following kind of condition: take a look at some people in a kind of underground cavernous dwelling . . . (Rep. 514 A 1–3)

17 See above, sect. 1, and below, sect. 7.4.
Socrates speaks of ‘our education’ because he is thinking of the condition of people in general, in non-ideal cities. But by 519 C–520 D we find that this describes the situation in the ideal city too. So both motifs are about the perfect city’s provisions for educating the young in the womb of the earth.

Secondly, we should note the many birth-related motifs in the Cave, and in the other parts of Republic that are about educating the philosopher rulers. At 515 E 6–516 A 1 a prisoner is ‘released’ and dragged out of the Cave into the light, and at 521 C 2–3 Socrates asks us to consider ‘how someone will lead them up to the light, as they say some people come up out of Hades to the gods’. In the Noble Lie, at 414 E 1–2, the earth-mother unfastens and spews out the neonates at the end of their education. Some of the expressions about emerging into the light after a period of gestation are parallel to the terminology that Plato uses of the delivery of a child in the Timaeus. Perhaps we should also see a reference to the rotation of the child in the womb, ready for birth, in the idea of studies that can ‘turn the soul’ to prepare it for birth into the light. We are reminded (though not explicitly) of Socrates’ self-description of himself as a midwife.

The trainee philosophers are to be delivered into the light by means of an education that reveals a whole new world outside the Cave. So the Cave is not just about politics. It is not just about needing philosophers to return to run the state: they must also return to educate the young. Who is it that will first force a youngster to turn and shed his chains? Who will drag him out into a world he had no desire to see? Surely a philosopher midwife who returns to the dream world to forge the gold in the soul of those capable of philosophy and bring them out into the light, where they can flourish.

---

18 καὶ μὴ ἀνείη πρὶν ἐξελκύσειν εἰς τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς, ἀρα οὐχὶ ὀδυνᾶσθαι τε ἂν καὶ ἀγανακτεῖν ἐλκόμενον, καὶ ἐπειδὴ πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἐλθοῦ . . .; (‘and not to let go until he has dragged him out into the light of the sun, wouldn’t he find it painful and distressing being dragged along, and when he got near to the light . . .?’).

19 καὶ πῶς τις ἀνάξει αὐτοῦς εἰς φῶς, ἀντι πέρ εὖ Ἀιδοῦ λέγονται ἀνήκειν εἰς θεοὺς ἄνελθεῖς.

20 ἡ γῆ αὐτοῖς μῆτηρ οὖσα ἀνῆκεν (‘the earth, being their mother, let them loose’).

21 e.g. Tim. 91 D 2–5.

22 524 E–525 A (μεταστρεπτικῶν). Cf. also Aristophanes’ speech at Sym. 190 E 3, where Zeus rotates the heads of the newly halved humans.

23 Theaet. 150 b and passim. There Socrates is delivering his pupil’s unborn theories, whereas in the Republic the pupil herself needs to be delivered. Midwives are still needed, however.
6. Ideological inhibitions

On the basis of these parallels with the Cave, we are now in a position to challenge several dominant ideas about Plato’s ideological aims in recommending the use of the Noble Lie. First we shall consider what makes Socrates embarrassed about his proposal. Is there something that would be difficult for his listeners to accept? If so, what?

6.1. Why is it hard to believe?

Before blurting out his plan for a founding fiction, Socrates expresses great hesitation about what he is about to propose. This is the exchange that comes immediately before [T1].

[T8] You’re hesitant about telling it, by the looks of you, he said. You’ll see that it was perfectly reasonable to be hesitant, once I do say it, said I. Tell away, he said, and stop worrying. Tell it I shall, then—though I can’t think where I’ll get the courage or the words to do so— (Rep. 414 C 8–D 2)

Recent interpreters have generally taken Socrates’ embarrassment to be occasioned by the need for falsehood. Socrates had just spoken of pragmatic justifications for the occasional use of falsehood. The relevant text is [T9], which also refers back to an earlier discussion of lying (382 A–D), in which Socrates had suggested that lying is acceptable only in suboptimal situations. It seems surprising, then, that lying should be required in a perfect society. But is it this or something else that makes Socrates embarrassed? Socrates makes four remarks about the difficulties that he foresees in trying to convince people, none of which mentions falsity as a problem. Let us look at the relevant passages.

First, in conversation with Glaucon Socrates mentions that the best situation would be if we (the founders) could above all (μάλιστα)

24 A counter-example is Wardy, ‘Ideology’, 132, who takes the problem to be purely the practicality of deception, as though Plato had no qualms about the use of falsehood. (The present article, born during the oral discussion of Wardy’s paper at its first outing, counters both views.)

persuade the rulers. Or failing that, we should persuade the rest of the city.

[T9] So shall we help ourselves to a device, I said, in the form of one of those fictions we were talking of earlier, that grow up in times of need? Shall we fabricate a noble one, to convince above all \( \mu \alpha \lambda \iota \sigma \tau \alpha \) even the rulers themselves? But if not, the rest of the community? \( \textit{Rep. 414 B 7–C 2} \)

In the preceding passage Socrates had just distinguished, within the Guardian class, between ‘Rulers’ and ‘Auxiliaries’.\(^{26}\) So saying that we should ‘convince above all the rulers’ means the rulers as opposed to Auxiliaries and others. Convincing just the others is clearly second best.

A moment later, just after [T’9], he makes a similar remark, quoted already in [T1]/[T3]:

[T10] I’ll try first to convince the rulers themselves and the military, and then the rest of the community, that all the nurture and education that we gave them seem like dreams \( \dot{o} \nu \iota \rho i \alpha \tau \alpha \) that they experienced, or happened round them, when in truth at that time they were being moulded and nurtured deep under the ground . . . \( \textit{Rep. 414 D 2–7} \)

In [T10], as in [T9], Socrates says that he will try to convince the rulers. Here he says ‘first’ \( \pi \rho \omega \tau \omicron \omicron \nu \) whereas there he said ‘above all’ \( \mu \alpha \lambda \iota \sigma \tau \alpha \). Here he does not say ‘if not, then the rest of them’, as he did in [T9], but ‘first these and then the rest’. Since [T10] comes just after [T9], it is reasonable to think that these express roughly the same thought;\(^ {27}\) although the second is slightly more ambitious, he still commits himself only to attempting this, and there remains a possibility of failure. Nevertheless, the common idea in both cases is that he should work \textit{in this order}, to persuade the rulers first and foremost, if the project is to succeed.

Between [T9] and [T’10] comes our third remark. Socrates observes that the story he will fabricate refers to events that happened long ago in faraway places (according to the poets), but which no longer happen around here. We do not find people being born from the earth ‘here with us’ \( \dot{e} \dot{\epsilon} \phi \prime \dot{\epsilon} \mu \iota \omega \nu \) :


Nothing novel, I said, but something Phoenician in origin, that once occurred widely, so the poets say and have us believe—though

\(^{26}\) \textit{414 A–B.} \(^{27}\) See further below, sect. 8.
Philosopher Kings and the Noble Lie

not something that has ever arisen in our own society and I don’t know that it ever would—but vast in its capacity to command conviction.  
(Rep. 414 c 3–7)

Again Socrates makes no mention of falsity or historical implausibility as reasons for disbelief. Although he claims that such events no longer occur, that apparently makes the story more convincing, not less so. Much of this may be intended as cynical jokes at the expense of Athens.  

Finally, having recounted the myth, Socrates worries again about its uptake. He asks Glaucon to think of a mechanism for installing the myth:

[T12]  Do you have any device whereby we could get this myth endorsed?  

Nothing, he said, to make these people themselves believe it. But that their sons, and subsequent generations, and all the people who came after, would.  

But that too, I said, would contribute towards making them take more care for the community and for each other.  
(Rep. 415 c 7–d 3)

By ‘these people themselves’ Glaucon means the first generation. He thinks that one might fail to convince the first generation, but succeed in establishing the myth among subsequent generations.

Why does Glaucon think that? Most readers seem to assume that he means that later generations will be ignorant, and this will facilitate belief. They assume that the first generation will be unpersuadable because they know full well that they were not born of the earth, whereas persuading a generation that did not know the facts would be easier. If the relevant facts are in an inaccessible past known only from myths, the later generations could be deceived.

This interpretation of Glaucon’s suggestion presupposes (a) that the ‘birth from the earth’ in the myth refers to a literal birth and involves denying biological facts about one’s birth in infancy—whereas I have argued that it means the transition to adult life—so that what inhibits belief is knowledge of biological facts; and (b) that the myth tells only of the birth of the first generation, not every generation, since Glaucon’s suggestion would make no sense.

28 For Athenian autochthony myths see e.g. Thuc. 2. 36; Plato, Menex. 237 b; N. Loraux, The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship and the Division between the Sexes [Children], trans. C. Levine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
if the myth is about where babies come from and is told of every
generation. Obviously, if everyone knows that human babies are
born from human mothers here and now, it would be no easier to
persuade the second generation than the first that they were born
some funny way.

In Section 7.1 below I present the case against the first-
generation-only assumption. For now, however, I shall develop my
alternative proposal, based on the assumption that what hinders
belief is not knowledge of biology or history, but ideology, the
existing beliefs of Socrates’ audience about how social status is
transmitted. Perhaps the hard bit is not birth out of the earth,
which conflicts with biology, but the radical message about break-
ing down inherited privilege, which conflicts with convention. For
sometimes the truth is harder to believe than something false but
comfortable.

Why would Glaucon suppose that later generations would more
readily believe, then, if the difficulty is ideological? We need not in-
fer, from his response here, that Socrates intended the myth to be
about only the first generation, since there are several other ways of
reading the dialectic, any of which would fit well with my proposal
that Socrates means the myth to be told in every generation, about
the birth of every generation. Some of these alternatives are less
charitable to Glaucon than others, and I propose that we take the
most charitable and most enlightening one. Least charitable would
be to suppose that Glaucon simply misunderstands what Socrates
has in mind, imagining a first-generation-only myth like the ex-
sting ones. More charitably, he may be correctly understanding
Socrates’ proposal, and correctly noting the quite general truth that
stories learnt at one’s mother’s knee are more readily assimilated. It
does indeed seem that major ideological changes typically take more
than one generation to become embedded, and that first you must
persuade a few and then bring up the young to accept the story from
their youth. So that would sufficiently explain Socrates’ response,
at 415 D 2–3 (‘I kind of get your point’).

But perhaps—more interestingly—Socrates has really thrown
Glaucon a false problem, so that although he sees what Glaucon
is trying to achieve, and understands why he thinks that things
will improve by the second generation, in fact the difficulty that
they are imagining will eventually dissolve, even before we need to
persuade the first rulers. Socrates’ question had implied (perhaps
ironically, but realistically on the surface) that there would be a difficulty, so it is no surprise that Glaucon agreed and sought to resolve it, if not at once, then at least by the second generation, because, as things stand, you would indeed expect the rulers and aristocrats to be the least ready to give up the idea of inherited privilege. But Socrates himself knows that the problem will have dissolved once we reach book 7 of this text, by which time we shall understand who these rulers are and what they will believe about themselves. ‘But this will turn out in whatever way the omens take it’, he says: a mock-serious utterance which could be heard to say that it is in the lap of the gods whether the myth gets believed. But surely Socrates really means that the omens are good. It will be a success—we just do not yet have the resources to see why.

6.2. Some existing accounts of the ideological content

One obvious motive for recommending the autochthony myth is to promote loyalty to the land and its inhabitants, as Socrates explicitly observes:

[T13] . . . so now, just as they would about their mother and nurse, they will engage in deliberation about the land [χώρα] in which they dwell and defend it, should anyone threaten it, and they will take thought on behalf of their fellow citizens, on the basis that they are siblings and earth-born. (Rep. 414 E 2–5)

This is not a new ideology. It is the traditional use to which such autochthony myths were put in the ancient world, although we can now see that Plato provides a much richer significance to this motif of unified devotion to the same mother, since his myth is actually about deliberately dividing the classes. Unity across that hierarchy of adult citizens will be fostered by ensuring that the children have all grown up together, sharing the same womb for years, no matter what class or role they are to occupy as adults, as we shall see.31

29 415 D 4–5. I disagree with recent interpreters who take φήμη here to be a reference to the popular voice (as recommended by J. Adam, The Republic of Plato (Cambridge, 1902), ad loc.). Rather, I take it as one of Socrates’ typical hints at the need for divine assistance.

30 Continues [T2].

31 See further sect. 7.4. See also 519 E–520 A for a similar ambition in the requirement to get the philosophers back down into the Cave, ‘making them give and take with each other the benefits that each can provide to the others’, for the sake of unifying the community. The return to the Cave is the mirror image of the birth from it: both plunge all classes into a shared environment from which no privilege or elitism must remove them.
The idea of loyalty and commitment to the country is all that most scholars in anglophone traditions notice in the myth, doubtless because that is the motif that is familiar from the historical parallels, and because Socrates (perhaps ironically) borrows that motif and appears to endorse it. But if that is what the myth is about, what is the warrant for deception in a city where good reasons could be given instead? Equally, such familiar themes would not explain the extreme hesitation that Socrates expresses about making his proposal. This leaves several strange mysteries unanswered.

By contrast, in the French tradition thinkers have suspected a gender agenda. Nicole Loraux, for example, takes Plato’s myth to be replicating the Athenian autochthony myth, which she thinks was designed to eliminate maternal contributions from Athens’ grandeur. She infers that Plato was doing the same for his city, although surprisingly—as also with Irigaray—she seems never to have explored this particular myth in any detail. She takes it for granted that Plato was trying to devalue the role of real mothers in his state.

While it is certainly possible to use a myth, or indeed a political system, that displaces the need for traditional mothers, for misogynist purposes or to promote a patriarchal ideology, I do not think that we should read Plato’s Republic as an attempt to do that. If Loraux is right that Athens deployed such a myth as a way to secure its patriarchal system, surely that is the opposite of what Socrates wanted. Would Plato be endorsing, as opposed to ridiculing, the Athenian ideology that condemned Socrates to death for engaging in philosophical enquiry? Granted, Socrates’ myth would indeed remove the birth mother’s role in raising the child, but it also eliminates the genetic father. Since it does not negate the importance of feminine roles for nurturing the infants, but simply re-

---

32 See Schofield, Plato, 286.
33 See above, sect. 6.1.
35 Loraux, Children, 9–10. Compare Irigaray’s reading of the Cave (above, sect. 3).
assigns those roles to state mothers and nurses, Socrates seems to be accepting the importance of mothers and the place which a boy’s mother holds in the heart of the adult citizen, which is what underlies his claim that the grown men will feel such absolute loyalty to their common ‘birth’ mother, the earth (414 ε 2–5 = [T13]).

I would therefore resist the idea that Plato’s aim was to deny the importance of mothers. In his myth the ‘earth’ is pictured as a mother precisely because mothers are so highly valued and influential. Earth’s motherly womb is the crucible where the citizen’s virtues of body and soul are formed. Her influences are what make the citizens perfect. Recognizing that this myth is about education, not biology, makes the role of mother earth even more important.

Besides these two readings, the standard one in the anglophone reception of Plato is probably that associated with Karl Popper. On this reading Plato’s aim is to deceive people into accepting and preserving a class system that is not natural but is falsely presented as if it were. The Popperian reading assumes that the Myth of the Metals is a lie which is pragmatically necessary but does not reflect any facts in nature. Interpreters who take it this way differ in how deceptive the lie is, from regarding it (as Popper did) as pure racist propaganda with no basis in truth, to regarding it as a ‘pharmacological lie’ propping up difficult truths.

6.3. A more subversive message: eliminating hereditary inequalities, parental influence, and educational privilege

In reading Plato’s political proposals, it is always better to suppose that he is challenging the prevailing ideology. Indeed, finding that the proposal is radical and strange would better explain Socrates’ hesitation in speaking of it. Perhaps he subverts an existing autochthonous motif to found a new just society instead, one in which human parentage has no bearing on status and all gender roles are removed, replaced by equality of opportunity for all, maximum social mobility, and gender-neutral career structures. Surely he is rejecting, not adopting, Athenian ideology.

If this is right, what is new about his proposed ideology will be

---

36 The text is gender-neutral here, and will obviously apply to female earth-borns too, but I take it that Socrates has in mind his own experience of the way a young man responds to an insult against his mother.


the idea that people start life equal as infants, and are not to be classified until they have had a chance to show their aptitudes. The idea that a child’s status and its future role in society must not be influenced in any way by its birth or parenting should be mind-blowing to Socrates’ audience. Plato abolishes status by birth. There is to be no hereditary peerage, no royal family, no hereditary shoemakers, no inheriting of a family business. A shoemaker’s son must become a ruler if he is fit to be a ruler. He must not be left trying to make shoes. Nor must a ruler’s son be asked to make political policy if he is better at cobbling.

Plato’s current readers clearly struggle to see how radical this project is, and in what way it is radical, compared with either a traditional aristocratic ideology or the democratic ideology of Athens. Plato is looking for a better system, to ensure that nothing affects your chances of a powerful position except political wisdom and aptitude. Democracy, which ignores political ability, is as much under attack as aristocracy, since democracy is itself a hereditary peerage system (privileges, including the franchise, being distributed by birth or parentage in standard cases). What Socrates aims for is equality of opportunity for all combined with distribution of responsibilities according to ability.

So Plato’s myth is shocking, hard to believe, something he hardly dares to utter, because instead of preventing social mobility it enables it. Everyone eventually acquires a class, but the classification is postponed until the moment of parturition from the education system. Its provisions are somewhat challenging even for democratic Athens, and very challenging for Plato’s oligarchic relations (who are Socrates’ imagined listeners). This easily explains Socrates’ hesitation, because the story challenges all existing political agendas, whether aristocratic, oligarchic, or democratic.

Meanwhile it is by no means clear that there is any genuine falsity in it, other than the picturesque metaphors. The message that it delivers is surely meant to be true. Yet the truth that it contains could still be hard to believe for anyone raised with conventional expectations about birth and inherited status. This would be a sufficient reason for thinking that the rulers will need to be persuaded.

39 Contrast the point at Menex. 238 c–d, where the speaker calls democracy an aristocracy—not on the grounds that political influence is inherited, but on the grounds that the people choose the best people as leaders.
40 See further below, sect. 8.
Perhaps there is no better or truer way to persuade them of the truth than by telling stories?

6.4. **Hierarchy by educational attainment, not by birth**

The Myth of the Metals elaborates on the idea of a birth from the womb of the earth by suggesting that students develop different metals in their soul during their underground gestation, so that by the time they are ‘born’ some are imbued with copper, some with silver, and some with gold.

[T14] But still, you should go on and listen to the rest of the myth. ‘For all of you who live in this community,’ we in our myth-making role shall say to them, ‘you are all brothers; but the god who moulded you, those among you, on the one hand, who are capable of governing, he mixed gold into the birth for them, making them highest in honour; those who are auxiliaries, secondly, silver; but iron and copper for the agricultural and other manual workers.’ ([Rep. 415 A 1–7](#))

This provides a mythic aetiology for differences in the citizens’ aptitudes and career prospects. Since, as we have seen, ‘birth’ is the birth into citizen life at the end of school education, this is giving an account of the differences in the citizens’ souls by the time they enter adult life. The rulers are required to sort the citizens according to their metals rather than by any system of privileges that would advance an unqualified citizen, or demote one who was more able.

This part of the myth calls upon many fruitful images, such as the idea that creatures that lived and grew underground would naturally absorb the minerals of the earth (such as those evident in stalactites and the salts and metal ores in the mines), and the idea of selective absorption, each soul exclusively admitting one pure metal so that they come out fitted for one kind of occupation. These motifs draw upon metaphors from chemistry and geology. At the same time there is the continued motif of motherhood and nurture, the idea of an embryonic self nurtured with moral training and intellectual development as well as material sustenance. We can imagine that mother earth is sensitive to the emerging metals in the child’s soul, so that each emerges, at its *second birth*, suitably trained for its own best career.

Thirdly there is the image of divine creativity. Socrates says that
Catherine Rowett

it is ‘the god’ who mixes one or another metal into the child’s soul. Why a god? One effect is to specify that the process cannot be engineered by human agents. Which metal the child gets is determined externally, ‘by god’.

Neither can the Guardians cause a student to absorb gold, nor can they assume that she will become gold because she had gold parents. Their only question must be whether she has gold in her soul by the time of her birth into citizen life:

[T15] Given that you are all related to each other, all of you will for the most part beget others like yourselves, but there will be times when silver progeny will be conceived from gold, or gold from silver, and all the other metals from each other similarly. Hence the god’s first and most emphatic message to those who govern is that there is nothing about which they will be better guardians, and nothing that they will guard more carefully, than the progeny, as to what exactly has been mixed into their souls. (Rep. 415 A 7–B 7)

The Myth of the Metals is designed to ensure that citizens are not misclassified according to who their parents were (415 A–C). This is the most important instruction that the god gives, because the city will be destroyed if they ever make a mistake (415 B–C).

Given this rationale, Plato must mean that genetics cannot guarantee the transfer of metal from parent to offspring. Does he just mean that inheritance is fallible (and the failures must be picked up correctly), or that nothing is inherited? Either position is compatible with what Socrates has in mind, since the important point is that what matters for who you are is not who your parents are but what you are suited to. The only interpretation that cannot be right is Popper’s view that class is based on inherited racial characteristics.

How exactly you become prone to absorb silver rather than bronze is under-specified in the myth, except that the work is attributed to ‘the god’—which, as noted above, is a way of denying that it can be altered by human intervention. Some passages imply that offspring typically resemble their immediate parents (e.g. 415 A 7–B 3, within [T15]), while others warn the Guardians that

41 415 A 3. That is, no one gets mixed metals, as noted by Schofield, Plato, 290.
42 See further below (this section).
43 A similar warning is given about the rules of marriage at 546 d–e. See n. 52.
44 See [T14].
45 There are other ways of reading this passage, which could mean that all the
nothing stops their children from having something quite different (415 B 7–c 8). These are not, of course, contradictory.

In any case it is clear that Socrates’ main point is the negative one: that one absolutely must not rely on the mere probability. The passage at 415 a–c instructs the rulers not to cut corners: they must test for the metal, not go by the parentage. They might be tempted to use parentage as a rule of thumb, or to promote someone they think was their own son or daughter. In reality, as we later discover (460 d, 461 d), the society will not keep track of the parentage of Guardian offspring—a provision which effectively removes the latter temptation provided the scheme is correctly followed.

Whether Plato thought that abilities were mainly inherited, or mainly random, the earth-womb is clearly provided to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to acquire and develop talents, and manifest them, before being assigned to their life-plan. We need not determine exactly what is due to nature and what to nurture, providing that we understand that the nurture is designed to ensure that no one is set up to fail owing to unequal chances.

To sum up, then, Plato’s position is that whatever hereditary influence there may be on a youth’s capacity to absorb this metal or that, it is unreliable and must be ignored as regards educating her for future life (for which nothing but her actual abilities count). Furthermore, we should not confuse inherited ability with inherited privilege, which is where people gain advantages that do not match their ability (whether inherited or not), simply as a result of belonging to some privileged family.

7. Further details on inheritance and class

My reading differs in several ways from the received readings. In this section I turn to some smaller questions of interpretation that need to be addressed, in order to engineer a more complete reversal of our expectations and responses. Finally, in Section 8, I shall step back once more to note the advantages of discovering in the Noble Lie a myth that befits a state which claims to be awake and not dreaming, and one which is trying to be completely just in its distribution of work.

children are mainly very similar, apart from the metals, because all families share a common genetic pool.

46 415 b; cf. 459 d–460 b.
7.1. *Is the Myth of the Metals about all generations or just the founding generation?*

As noted above, there are two readings of the Myth of the Metals. Either it is a story for every generation about their own birth, or it is a story for every generation about the birth of a founding generation.

The first-generation-only reading may seem easier because other ancient myths of autochthony, such as the Cadmeian myth, were first-generation-only myths. Moreover, as we saw above, many assume that this is why Glaucon thinks that the second generation would more readily believe it. Such readers might also appeal to the fact that after explaining the myth, Socrates goes on to speak of leading out his band of new citizens to find a place to colonize (415 D–E). This evidently refers to a one-time event in the first generation.

However, it would be a mistake to think that this motif, of ‘arming them and leading them to find a place to colonize’, has any bearing on the meaning. Socrates does indeed pretend, throughout the *Republic*, that he and his friends are founding the city, setting up its first rulers, delivering instructions for how they should go on. But the Noble Lie is part of the instructions for how to go on. Just as the first generation will be taught that the ‘education that we gave them’ was all a dream (414 D 4–5), so also the next generation need to be told that the education they received was as much a dream as that of the first, and was where they acquired their metals. All the difficulties with this idea dissolve once we see that the myth is about a rite of passage into adult life, and is about assigning young adults to their careers by aptitude, not birth.

Meanwhile the first-generation-only interpretation suffers from a fundamental flaw, viz. that we have no real interest in whether the first generation were once defined by the metals infused into their soul. What matters for the survival of the city is that today’s generation must be classified by the metal in their soul, not by their ancestors’ metal. The metal must be checked for each citizen, in each generation, because it may not match what their parents had. A myth which declares that the first generation was sorted by metals has no use whatever, least of all if it means (as in the old auto-

---

47 See above, sect. 6.1.
48 The ‘founding generation only’ view appears in e.g. Schofield, *Plato*, 287, 303; Rosenstock, ‘Athena’s Cloak’, 370.
Philosopher Kings and the Noble Lie

chthony myths), that privilege runs in families from the privileged ancestors. So although the ancient myths that Plato parodies may have been first-generation-only myths, Socrates evidently needs to invent a new version that is repeated for every generation.

7.2. Is the eugenics programme relevant to inherited metals?

Besides the metals (which represent generic aptitudes), citizens will show various degrees of talent or excellence in their roles. Here too, it seems, sons and daughters must typically resemble their parents, since the eugenics programme that Socrates devises (459 D–460 B) is designed to raise standards in this respect, especially to get more of the very best Guardians—not more Guardians, but more of the talented ones and fewer of the less able. To that end the most talented Guardians are awarded more sexual liaisons, to increase the offspring from that stock at the expense of others in the same class.

The idea is not that those chosen Guardians will make more silver or gold babies. Socrates does not want to increase the number of silver or gold babies: stable numbers must be envisaged in each class, since he aims at a stable population overall. So the selective breeding programme is not about increasing the chances of getting gold—any old gold—but rather increasing the chances of getting someone at the top of their class and reducing the chances of getting the mediocre ones, and thereby raising the general standards of talent.

Being a talented Guardian is not a matter of having a different metal, since the metal is what defines her class, not her rank in it. Perhaps exceptional talent might consist in having more of the relevant metal, though nothing in the text suggests that. But even if that were so, there is still no conflict with the main message of the Noble Lie, which is that the presence of one metal or another, let alone how

50 Compare the ‘digression’ in the Theaetetus (esp. 174 E–175 B), where Socrates portrays the true philosopher as unmoved by conventional claims to status by wealth, birth, or the prestige of one’s ancestors generations back. Thanks to an anonymous OSAP referee for this nice point. I shall have more to say on the proximity of the Theaetetus to the Republic and the Phaedo in my forthcoming book on Plato on knowledge and truth.

51 The risk from not following the selective breeding programme is that, owing to inferior breeding, the rulers will become less good at distinguishing the metals in the souls (546 D–E), which in turn leads to (a) misclassification of the young and hence (b) muddled classes, leading to (c) corruption of values among the rulers.
much of it, is significantly unpredictable. Whether or not breeding for excellence can be done, because children often take after their parents in virtue as well as metals, it remains true that the citizens must always be classified by their actual abilities, not by what you hoped they would be like, given who their parents are.

7.3. Are the metals due to ‘nature’?

Socrates sometimes speaks of people having a ‘nature’, or ‘growing gilded or silvered’. Because of the double birth, it is unclear what this means. In the autochthony metaphor ‘birth’ is leaving school, so one’s ‘nature’ (phusis) at that birth would be the adult condition, not the condition when the child entered the earth-womb. So when some earth-born citizen is said to have grown silvered or gilded (415c3–4), that does not mean that she started her education with a phusis already silvered or gilded. Rather, that is being denied. When she enters the earth-womb at bio-birth, the god has not yet infused her soul with any metal at all.

Were the infants already naturally differentiated, such that some tend naturally to absorb bronze and some to absorb silver or gold? Or is it the god’s whim which gets which? Here no answer is specified, I think, and perhaps none is required. Plato’s point is that any nature that the child might have at bio-birth is quite opaque to her parents and to the rulers. They can only see and judge the nature of the developed adolescent, when her education is complete, and then no prejudice must deny that one who entered the education system without any evident gold or silver may well have come out finely gilded with intellectual achievements or military prowess. By the time of citizen birth, each citizen has acquired a phusis. We neither should nor can ask what its phusis was before its gestation, if it even had one.

It would be wrong to suppose that when Socrates describes the phusis required in a Guardian (374e–376e), he means her nature prior to education. The point of asking (at 376c) how to educate them, to get that result, is to work out how the city is to instil and develop such a phusis in them by the time they are born as citizens, through gestation in the womb of a state education. There is no con-

53 415c1–2 (τὴν τῇ φύσει προσήκουσαν τιμὴν ἀποδόντες); 415c3–4 (καὶ ἂν αὐτὸς ἐκ τούτων τις ὑπόχρυσος ἢ ὑπάργυρος φύη).
54 For the term φύσις used of our educational condition see also [T7] above.
trast between ‘nature’ and ‘education’ here, because the Myth of the Metals changes the period during which you acquire your nature. We are no longer to think that the nature is complete prior to infant birth. It gets completed and differentiated prior to citizen birth. ‘Nature’ is one’s native character at the time of nativity, whichever ‘birth’ is at issue in a given context. In this context, the relevant birth is citizen birth, as defined by the myth, and not bio-birth.

7.4. Do all the citizens undergo the elementary education described in Republic?

A largely unchallenged tradition assumes that Socrates describes an education that is for the Guardian class only, and that little or no provision is made for the education of the workers in the ideal city, other than apprenticeship in their craft. The case is made in a short article from 1949 by G. F. Hourani.

As Hourani notes, if true, this would make class mobility of the kind described in the Noble Lie impossible in practice, despite Socrates’ insistence on its importance. We must conclude, then, either that Plato never really meant that social mobility was crucial, and made no provision for it (in which case we might wonder why he provides the Noble Lie at all), or that it is false that he made no provision for it. The latter seems the more plausible and charitable hypothesis, and hence, if we have to conclude that Plato made some mistakes, it is more plausible that he made some less serious

55 It might be held that the absurdity (to our eyes) of sorting newborns was less obvious to the ancients. But I sincerely doubt that Aristotle was thinking of sorting human children when he said, at Pol. 1254b23, that some things (neuter) are differentiated for ruling or being ruled right from birth. Since he is talking at least partly about the natural rule of man over beast, or predator over prey, presumably these are just things that differ according to whether they belong to the dominant species or not (which is indisputably apparent at birth). And indeed, Aristotle also grants that however much nature ‘tries’ to differentiate the bodies of slaves and free correctly, in reality there is frequently a mismatch (1254b27–34). So any infant sorting by bodily appearance would be as risky and inappropriate for Aristotle as it is for Plato.

56 The same reading can be applied throughout to the references to the philosophic ‘nature’ in the Third Wave section, 485–502, though here is not the place to explain this in detail. But note 485 D 3–4, which refers to the philosophers’ desire for truth from the word go (from when he was a young man, εὐθὺς ἐκ νέου), and 487 A 7–8, which confirms that the nature is achieved as a result of a combination of education and reaching the right age (παιδείᾳ τε καὶ ἡλικίᾳ). See also the question whether women are invariably inferior at some or all tasks (455 c–d), where we are also considering what adult women are good at after being educated, and whether they too can acquire a philosophical nature by being educated in the same way as the men.

57 Hourani, ‘Education’. See above, n. 2.

58 Hourani, ‘Education’, 60.
Catherine Rowett

mistakes (such as, for instance, sometimes forgetting that the education is intended for all classes, not just Guardians) and not the more egregious and politically inept mistake of denying children the chance of becoming what they should be, and thereby destroying the justice of his city and retaining the old hereditary privilege instead of the novel meritocracy that was his pride and joy.

We should not, of course, be surprised that Socrates starts with a question about how we should educate our Guardians. For initially, before the meritocratic system has been explained, it looks as if education for ruling is what is required, above all. But once we meet the Noble Lie, we realize that this education that instils gold, silver, and bronze into different souls must be an education for all, since that is how those minerals are distributed in the process of nurturing underground. So Socrates’ initial question, at 376c, was ‘How shall we bring these people up?’ It follows Socrates’ initial description of what a Guardian for the ideal state must be like. These well-trained civilized young people need an education which produces that result. Book 3 investigates what education that is.

Yet although we started by asking how to make Guardians, and indeed we finish book 3 with that question, the effect of adding the Noble Lie and the Myth of the Metals at 414b is to round that account off by showing that actually, remarkably enough, this underground womb is designed to nurture all the citizens together and develop skills that differentiate them from each other. This must be so, because it is in that womb, during that education, that all the citizens progressively absorb their metals, and it is from there that they emerge as citizens and take up their various careers. The Noble Lie reveals that all citizens enter the womb undifferentiated and leave it differentiated. So there were no ready-made Guardians at the start. There were just infants.

It stands to reason, of course, that an elementary education in good stories, poetry, and music is essential for a bronze child just as much as for a silver one. In fact the tripartite analysis of the soul makes it clear that all three parts of the soul—and likewise, therefore, all three classes in the state—need to be willingly in accord with reason and amenable to rule by collaboration and consent rather than oppression and control. It is this harmonious accord that constitutes the virtue of sōphrosunē in the state and the soul. It would make no sense, then, to leave children of the third class

59 Rep. 431 d–e.
exposed to stories that encourage appetite, depravity, or any other vices. The idea that ill-educated masses would be deleterious in the ideal state is therefore not just an a priori hunch.60

Most of Plato’s discussion is about how to manage the lives of the Guardians. Certainly, when it comes to explaining how Auxiliary women can work alongside men in the military, provision must be made for their children to be removed to a nursery (461 C–D). In making this provision for women to combine reproduction with a military career, Socrates says nothing whatever about the provision for children of other mothers. The premisses deployed in Socrates’ argument about gender equality are not peculiar to the skills or duties of Guardians. Indeed, Socrates notes that the same argument applies to so-called women’s work such as weaving, making sacrificial muffins, and preparing boiled vegetables (455 C 5–D 1). Based on the section on women Guardians, there is no reason to go either way on whether the city’s communal crèche is also for the children of workers. Yet clearly the myth of the earth-womb strongly implies that all of them are installed down there in the womb together from infancy, absorbing whatever they can from the fine educational provisions that Socrates has described.

Given that Socrates is primarily interested in how to train Guardians for roles in politics and defence, it is hard to discover in detail how or when the bronze children would begin their apprenticeship for their designated craft.61 How would this fit within the single common womb of development, where some are acquiring bronze, while others are absorbing Guardian metals? On the one hand it seems obvious that there must be provision for both: that what it is to acquire bronze in the soul during gestation just is to spend

60 For evidence of the inclusion of all classes see 423 C–424 E, where Socrates says that the crucial thing is to give the community a good start, ‘for if you maintain a good nursery and education system [τροφὴ καὶ παιδείας χρηστὴ] that will form good natures’ (424 Α 6–7), which then forms a virtuous circle of ever improving education from generation to generation. Among the major worries are popular music and other forms of indiscipline. So (424 E 6) we have to get the children (‘our children’, meaning the ones in our new community) playing in the right way from the start, learning to respect their elders, and so on.

61 There is evidence for a period of apprenticeship at 467 Α 2–5, where Socrates remarks that potters’ children spend years watching and learning at their father’s side before making pots themselves—though this may be about apprentices in Athens, not in the new republic. His point is that Guardian children in the new state should have an apprenticeship at least as long as the potters’ children currently get. See also 456 D, where Socrates is disparaging about the inferior education of the workers (on which see below).
time learning a craft and practising with the relevant equipment. If we are to speculate, the best guess seems to be that the education starts out the same for all, and then as the metals become apparent, students must choose or be directed towards routes that suit their talents, though all are still in the same underground womb. When they are born fully grown with their manufactured equipment (414 D 8) we need not suppose that this is just the arms and weapons for the ones entering the professional military (those had already been mentioned at line 7); it will also include the anvil or the potter’s wheel. The citizens must have tools for their profession, and an education that fits them for citizen life and their role within it.

At 456 D 8–10 Socrates says some rather disparaging things about the craftsmen, describing their education as much inferior to that of the Guardians.62 ‘In the city which we have founded,’ he says, ‘which are the superior men—the Guardians (having had the education we’ve just described), or the shoemakers who’ve been educated in shoemaking?’ ‘Silly question,’ says Glaucon (456 D 11). If this refers to two wholly separate training schemes, as many suppose, then it precludes social mobility (as Hourani noted) if the children are assigned to those schools before their metals are apparent, on the basis of some other criterion such as birth.63 Socrates makes this remark in relation to the schooling of Guardians: his point is that some women may also be suited for Guardian studies. He thereby implies that these girls, like the Guardian boys, get a better type of education than the one given to those destined to be shoemakers. However, we should not infer that those cobbler boys, who get the inferior education, were picked out as craftsman material rather than Guardian material before their metals started to become apparent; nor that those Guardian girls were already assigned to Guardian studies before their metals started to show. Neither could have been sent to their respective schooling on any basis other than the emergence of some relevant metals. And indeed, for the social mobility requirement all we need is the proviso that any specialization there may be in the common schooling must be congruent with the metal of the child’s soul and not determined by anything else.

So even if, by their teenage years, these different youths are pursuing rather different studies, yet it is most important (for unity and

Philosopher Kings and the Noble Lie

Philosopher Kings and the Noble Lie

brotherhood) that they are not in a different womb and that they will not be born any sooner. They must all continue to be nurtured underground together until both groups have a complete deposit of metals, whether these are developed through practical exercises or intellectual training, or both. All of them will be born when their respective metal deposits are complete and when all are ready to enter an adult life, whether it be a life of military service, intellectual endeavour, or productive work.

8. Is it important that the rulers believe it first? And is it actually a lie?

As we noted above (Section 6.1), Socrates says at 414 D 2 (within [T10]) that he will try to persuade first the rulers themselves, and the military, and then the rest of the city. A little earlier, at 414 C 1 (within [T9]), he had said he would persuade especially the rulers, or, failing that, the rest of the city. Both passages imply that this might be difficult, but both imply that the top priority is to convince the rulers.

It seems natural to take both passages to be recommending the same ambition, for the same reason. The potential failure, expressed in one case by ‘or, failing that, . . .’ and in the other by ‘I will try to persuade’, is presumably the same. He considers that, as a second best, he might have to persuade the rest instead, if the attempt fails with the rulers.

Does this mean that he does not care whether the rulers believe it, and that he really only wants the rest to be duped? That seems to me to be far from what is meant. In both texts Socrates places the top priority on convincing the rulers that their education was underground. We should not take his fear of failure to indicate that failing would not matter. In fact, it seems that everything depends upon the rulers being unswervingly committed to this myth and completely immune to any temptation to question it. Their unquestioning adherence to its provisions is of great practical significance for the city.

In addition, it is hugely significant morally. It makes the difference between a regime that rules by deception and a society that values integrity. If the rulers do not believe the ideology, but impose it by telling lies to the other classes, then their rule lacks the
Catherine Rowett

legitimacy and security that come from consensus and shared commitment to common ideals. The Noble Lie is much more noble, a morally superior proposal, if Socrates means that the rulers follow and recommend principles whose truth and worth they genuinely endorse.

These are among many reasons why the passage makes no sense unless Plato genuinely means that the rulers above all must be convinced, and that it is a matter of great importance that the rulers are not intentionally deceiving the people or concealing something that they know but others must not know, as though the class system were like the marriage numbers, delivering results that are untrue but convenient for some unmentionable purpose.64

Given how important this is, I do not think that it is at all desirable to settle the apparent discrepancy between the formulation at 414 C 1 (‘especially the rulers, or failing that . . .’) and that at 414 D 2 (‘first the rulers . . . then after that the rest’) by supposing that it always means ‘try but actually fail to convince the rulers’, as though the rulers never need to believe it. Such an admission of defeat, before they have even considered how the persuasion might be achieved, would be gross and imperfect. But in any case, now that we have found good reasons both for why it is true in a certain sense—in that it tells (by means of a stylized story) the truth about how students differ in aptitude by the time they leave school—and for why the rulers would actually be more than willing to believe it, including its subterranean imagery, as a result of their superior knowledge, there is no reason for Socrates to retain any doubts. Any doubts about how to convince them will have dropped away once the message of the Cave motif has been absorbed.

One reason why the worries drop away is that the metaphors in the Myth of the Metals turn out to be useful ways of expressing the truth about the things that the myth is supposed to govern. It could be said, then, that the reason why the lie ceases to be troublesome is that it is not really a lie, and that means that something has been

64 The marriage numbers are a case of genuine lying, because they conceal something that the rulers know but those affected must not know (for pharmacological reasons). The Noble Lie is not like that. It aims to see justice done by placing people in appropriate roles: not something to be concealed. No one is trying secretly to put people in the wrong roles. So it resembles the healthy stories of gods and heroes, which are not intended to deceive but to convey the truth in palatable form. The truth in question is not unmentionable on anyone’s story except Popper’s (which has no support in the text).
lost in the solution. What happened was not that we found a way
to deceive the rulers, but that we found that no deception was re-
quired and it was not a lie after all.

That would be one way to explain what has happened. If that
is what has happened, should we then object to Plato’s procedure,
introducing it as a lie and then showing that for his society it is
not a lie after all? There are clearly good dramatic reasons for that
procedure, and also some political reasons in that it subtly accuses
societies that use such myths to privilege certain families of living
by a lie, whether or not their rulers believe the lies they peddle. For
them, the lie defends privilege by birth instead of eliminating it,
and for them it is a lie.

Alternatively, we might say that its falsity has not been removed.
It remains literally false that the education was underground, that it
was all a dream, that it instilled minerals such as gold and copper and
so on. All these are metaphor. The earth is not our birth mother,
and what was provided in the education was provided by the state,
not the earth. Any truth in this myth is not in its mythical motifs,
rich though they are as metaphors, but in what they stand for, as
the rulers will realize.

So, perhaps after all the rulers will see through the myth to its
truth, in a way that other citizens will not. It transpires, then, that
although the rulers do believe it, and do not deceive or lie to the
people in teaching them the myth, it will never be more than a be-
lievable myth for the ordinary people, while it is only the philoso-
phers who will know how true it is and why. So there is, after all, a
difference in their epistemic relation to what they believe, and the
kind of persuasion achieved. The rulers will believe and understand
why, while the people will just believe (and that will be wisdom for
them too).\footnote{See Rep. 428 B–429 A on how the society counts as wise.}

*University of East Anglia*

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Clay, D., ‘Plato’s First Words’, in F. M. Dunn and T. Cole (eds.), *Begin-
Hesk, J., Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens (Cambridge, 2000).
ARISTOTLE ON TRUTH-BEARERS

DAVID CHARLES AND MICHAEL PERAMATZIS

In this article our aim is to establish, on the basis of a detailed reading of the relevant texts, that the primary truth-bearers are, in Aristotle’s view, such items as statements, affirmations, denials, and assertions, or mental states such as beliefs, judgements, and thoughts. Only such items, we shall argue, are characterized (straightforwardly and without qualification) by the whole disjunctive phrase ‘true or false’.

Some have attempted to interpret Aristotle, in broad outline, in the way we recommend. However, their view has been seriously challenged, on the basis of careful study of the relevant chapters of *Metaphysics* Δ, E, and Θ, by those who understand Aristotle’s primary truth-bearers to be things in the external world (often taken as states of affairs). Others have suggested that Aristotle’s

© David Charles and Michail Peramatzi 2016

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference on Aristotle’s conception of truth at Oxford in May 2013. We are grateful to all the participants for their questions, comments, and objections. We are particularly indebted to Enrico Berti, Walter Cavini, Paolo Crivelli, Edward Hussey, Oliver Primavesi, and Jan Szaif, who gave us extensive oral and written comments. We should also thank the two anonymous readers of *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* for their immensely useful objections, comments, and suggestions.

1 In this article we shall call all these items ‘propositional’: some are propositions, some express propositions, some can be represented as attitudes towards propositions.

2 Either only such items are characterized by the whole disjunctive phrase ‘true or false’ or only they are straightforwardly so characterized (non-metaphorically, without attenuation or qualification). There is no reason, for the purposes of this paper, to choose between these options.


views on this topic are inconsistent or ambiguous. Nor have proponents of the former view succeeded in establishing, on the basis of a detailed examination of these texts and the relevant manuscript tradition, that their critics are mistaken. Readers are, it seems, faced with an unpalatable dilemma: either attribute to Aristotle a philosophically plausible view or the one strongly supported by the relevant texts.

There is, we shall argue, no need to make this difficult, potentially embarrassing, choice. The key texts, carefully studied in the best manuscript tradition, support the view that, for Aristotle, the primary truth-bearers are statements, denials, assertions, beliefs, judgements, and thoughts. By contrast, states of affairs or other similar external, non-mental, or mind-independent items are not truth-bearers. In our interpretation, based on a study of all the relevant texts (as set out in the preferred manuscript tradition), Aristotle consistently maintained this philosophically plausible view of truth-bearers. All previous writers (known to us) have erred in failing to follow the key texts as preserved in that tradition. In the penultimate section we shall consider a more general methodological principle suggested by our approach.

1. Truth-bearers

This section argues for two claims. First, that there is strong evidence for the view that Aristotle reserves the whole disjunctive phrase ‘true or false’ exclusively for propositional items. Non-propositional items are never characterized by the entire disjunction ‘true or false’ but only by one part of it (in isolation): either as a ‘false’ thing, or as ‘the truth’, or (far more rarely) as a ‘true’ thing. Second, that when ‘true’ or ‘false’ is used to describe parts of external reality, Aristotle distinguishes this from his use of the disjunctive phrase ‘true or false’ elsewhere. When he talks of a false thing or of the truth in characterizing external things (and not propositional items), he provides signposts to indicate that these uses are importantly distinct from that involved in the whole disjunctive phrase ‘true or false’.

5 For a recent expression of such doubts see Burnyeat et al., Eta, ad loc.
1.1. In favour of propositional truth-bearers: Metaphysics Δ 7 and Ε 4

The best evidence in favour of taking Aristotle’s truth-bearers as propositional items is found in *Metaphysics* Δ 7. Here, the veridical use of ‘to be’ applies to true or false affirmations or denials, linguistic items (ὅμοιος ἐπὶ καταφάσεως καὶ ἀποφάσεως, 1017a32–3). Items such as ‘Socrates is cultivated’ or ‘Socrates is not pale’ are true, items such as ‘the square’s diagonal is commensurate’ are false (1017a33–5).

*Metaphysics* Δ 7 is an important text, not easily dismissed. The ‘Philosophical Lexicon’ is precisely where Aristotle should set out the central cases of what is true or false in exemplifying the veridical use of ‘to be’. It would be strange had he included anything apart from the primary cases of what is true or false. Propositional items, such as affirmations and denials, play this role.

One might, however, approach the question of Aristotle’s truth-bearers in a different way, taking as one’s starting point those chapters which treat the true and the false as their main subject-matter (as opposed to *Metaphysics* Δ 7, which deals with ‘is true’ and ‘is false’ as one among the many uses of ‘to be’). For this approach, *Metaphysics* Ε 4 and Θ 10 are crucial. Consider the introduction to Ε 4:

[T1] Let us, then, leave to the side the enquiry into that which is accidentally (for it has been sufficiently discussed); but that which is as true [τὸ δὲ ὡς ἀληθὲς ὄν] and which is not as false [καὶ μὴ ὡς ψεῦδος], since they depend on combination and division [ἔπειθη παρὰ σύνθεσιν ἐστὶ καὶ διαίρεσιν], both taken as a whole are about the distribution

---

6 At 1027b18 we follow the manuscripts against Jaeger, who inserts the article τό before μὴ ὡς ψεῦδος. In this way there is no suggestion that in introducing being true or false Aristotle is speaking of two rather than one single way of being. Being true or false can constitute a unitary way of being, without undermining the distinction between truth and falsity. One might describe veridical being as a unitary way of being with a positive and a negative pole: truth and falsity respectively.

7 Bonitz’s suggestion to take the preposition παρά at 1027b19 as ‘causal’ seems attractive. We sought to accommodate this suggestion in our translation using the notion of dependence: being true or false (causally) depends on thought operations of combination and division. The idea would be that combining or dividing items in thought is the cause for there being items which are true or false, i.e. for there being linguistic items or mental states which are true or false. It would not be plausible to hold that such thought operations are causes for an item’s being true (or for its being false): for it would be a short step from this causal dependence to some form of idealism. Further examples of the causal use of παρά in Aristotle occur at *Pr. An.*
of contradictory propositions; for the true \( \tau \delta \mu \nu \varepsilon \gamma \alpha \rho \alpha \lambda \eta \theta \varepsilon \) takes the affirmation in the case of what is combined, and the denial in the case of what is divided, while the false \( \tau \delta \varepsilon \psi \varepsilon \theta \delta \varepsilon \) takes the contradictory of this distribution . . . \(^8\) \textit{(Metaph. E 4, 1027}^b\textit{17–23, our translation)}

Aristotle is, it appears, concerned with ways or types of being in this passage since at 1027\(^b\)29–34 he contrasts being as true and non-being as false with the central way of being exemplified by categorical beings. Further, at the beginning of \textit{E 4} he contrasts the ‘true and false ways of being’ with accidental being (1027\(^b\)17–19). But what is the way or kind of being, taken as a whole, whose being or non-being is to be true or to be false respectively? Is it one applicable to external things (such as physical objects or states of affairs) comparable to (for example) being tall or being an actual giraffe? Or is it a way of being applicable only to propositional items such as thoughts?

Aristotle makes several relevant points in these lines. First, at the outset, he presents being true or false as a whole (σύνολον) as a way of being for certain types of proposition (καταφάσεις and ἀποφάσεις), in which being is being true and not-being being false. This way of being, as a whole, is distributed over, or apportioned to, contradictory propositions (1027\(^b\)20). This is because, as a whole, it belongs essentially to affirmations and denials, perhaps excluding some recalcitrant cases such as future contingents. Such affirmations and denials are distributed or apportioned in accordance with the following principle: either they are true or their contradictory is. This way of being is in its nature connected with the distribution of contradictory propositions. Being dependent in this way on the distribution of contradictory propositions is an essential feature of this way of being as a whole. As such, it is directly relevant to

\(^1\) 34, 48\(^a\)24, and 2. 17, 65\(^b\)6 (see LSJ s.v. \textit{παρά}, III. 7). A comparable usage can be found at \textit{Metaph. A 6, 987}^b\textit{8}: ‘perceptibles are called \textit{παρά} \textit{forms}’, i.e. \textit{after} and \textit{in virtue} or \textit{because of} them; cf. \textit{EE 3. 1, 1228}^a\textit{35–6}: \( \delta \gamma \alpha \rho \theta ρασ ς \pi α \rho \alpha \theta ρας \lambda \varepsilon \gamma \varepsilon \upsilon \pi α ρω \nu \upsilon \mu ω ς \). It seems plausible that paronymy is a case of causal dependence of the paronymous item on the item from which its name derives.

\(^8\) In our view there should not be any brackets at 1027\(^b\)20–3; rather, the brackets seem to fit well around 1027\(^b\)23–5: \( ν \o \nu \delta \varepsilon \tau \o \alpha \mu \alpha \ldots \delta \lambda \lambda \gamma \epsilon \upsilon \tau \iota \gamma \iota \gamma \nu \varepsilon \varepsilon \theta \delta \) we shall return to this point in sect. 2.

\(^9\) We should note that in discussing \textit{[T1]} and the other texts listed, our aim is to give a well-grounded and plausible reading, not to consider the whole range of alternatives others have suggested.
propositions or thoughts, not to external things (such as material entities). Further, it is definitionally dependent on the distribution of propositions according to the principle that either they are true or their contradictory is. In what follows we shall call this ‘the Principle of Contradictory Pairs’ (CP).  

Second, the way of being in question is, as Aristotle emphasizes, one which belongs per se to thoughts and is distinguished from a further distinctive way of being, which belongs per se to external, mind-independent objects (1028a1–3). The former depends on thinkers’ ability to combine and divide objects in thought (1027b29–30; see 1027b19), the latter does not. On these grounds he distinguishes between a way of being which does not depend on our thoughts and one (being true or false) which does. His acceptance of a distinct way of being (for external objects) which does not depend on our thoughts reflects his commitment to realism. What makes propositions true is independent of our thinking them to be true.  

The way of being applicable to external, mind-independent things is distinct: it is the way in which objects (not propositions) are, where objects do not have contradictories, still less contradictories governed by CP (or by a suitable counterpart to CP such as: either an object or its contradictory is true). Nor does the way of being for external objects depend essentially on our ability to combine and divide objects in thought. So understood, being true

\[ CP \text{ is cognate with what in C. W. A. Whitaker, Aristotle's De interpretatione: Contradiction and Dialectic (Oxford, 1996), 79, is called 'Rule of Contradictory Pairs' (RCP). As Aristotle holds in both Categories 10 and De interpretatione 6–9: 'of every contradictory pair, one member is true and the other false'. (We are indebted to Walter Cavini for this point.) It is important to note that CP need not hold of all propositions. There may, for all it says, be propositions (such as concern, for example, the future) where it is not the case that either a proposition or its contradictory is true (cf. De interpretatione 9).} \]

\[ For a characterization of realism of this form see M. Dummett, 'Truth', Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 59 (1958–9), 141–62 at 157: 'The correspondence theory expresses one important feature of the concept of truth which is not expressed by the law “It is true that } p \text{ iff } p \} \text{ and which we have so far left out of account: that a statement is true only if there is something in the world in virtue of which it is true' (Dummett's emphasis); see also pp. 161–2 for a characterization of the realism vs. anti-realism debate as focusing on the question of whether there is some independent reality (not of 'our own making') answering to our statements or not. See also Dummett, 'Realism and the Theory of Meaning', in id., The Logical Basis of Metaphysics (London, 1991), 322–51 at 325: '[Frege] made a classic pronouncement of the realist faith, saying that the truth of a proposition has nothing to do with its being taken as true.'} \]
or false (as a whole) exemplifies a way of being for propositions or thoughts, not objects in the external world.¹²

Truth-bearers are, we shall assume, the entities to which truth and falsity together (as a whole) belong. On the basis of the texts so far considered, it seems clear that Aristotle takes them to be propositional items. He does not mention any other items which exemplify being true or false.

1.2. Metaphysics Δ 29: things as truth-bearers?

Did Aristotle consistently hold this view? Some think that he did not. There are, indeed, passages in which the terms ‘false’ and ‘the truth’ are, it appears, applied to external objects, not to propositions or thoughts. Do these passages show that the way of being exemplified by being true and being false also applies to external objects? We shall argue that they do not. In fact, properly understood, they are fully consistent with the position Aristotle adopted in Metaphysics E 4 and Δ 7 (as set out above).

In Metaphysics Δ 29 Aristotle lists as the first way in which the false is said that of a false thing. The main case of a false thing is that in which there is no (or cannot be any) combination or combined thing (1024b17–19):

[T2] The false is said in a different way to be what is false as a thing [ὡς πράγμα ψεῦδος], and of this one case is said by something’s not being combined, or its being impossible to be combined (just as we say of a diagonal’s being commensurate, or of your sitting; for of these the first is always a false item, whereas the second sometimes; for it is in this way that these are non-beings [οὕτω γὰρ οὐκ ὄντα ταῦτα]) . . . Things, then, are called false in this way, either by their not being or . . . [πράγματα μὲν οὖν ψευδή οὐτω λέγεται, ἡ τῷ μὴ εἶναι αὐτὰ ἡ . . .]; but that account/statement is called false which is of those items which are not, in so far as it is false . . . [λόγος δὲ ψευδῆς ὥς τῶν

It is worth noting that linguistic items or mental states (taken as a single class) are not essentially true or essentially false: for, in Aristotle’s view, some can change their truth-value. Aristotle holds that a sentence (or a statement or an utterance?) can change its truth-value while remaining the very same linguistic item (Cat. 5, 4ª21–b13). This suggests that a given sentence’s being true (at t) is not essential or even necessary to it. Nor is its being false (at t+1) essential or necessary to it. What seems necessary (but presumably not essential?) is that either it or its contradictory is true (after CP). If so, the way of being consisting in being true or false may be a necessary way of being for a linguistic item or a mental state. It does not follow from this that being true or being false, each by itself, is a necessary way of being for this linguistic item or mental state.
Aristotle on Truth-Bearers

μὴ ὄντων, ᾗ ψεύδης . . .] (Metaph. Δ 29, 1024\textsuperscript{b}17–27, trans. Kirwan, modified)

The examples offered at 1024\textsuperscript{b}19–21 suggest that external things, such as the diagonal’s being commensurate, or your sitting—not any corresponding propositional item—are false, and in this way are non-beings (τούτων γὰρ ψεῦδος τὸ μὲν ἀεὶ τὸ δὲ ποτὲ· οὐτω γὰρ ὄντα ταῦτα). Further, the conclusion of the first section of Δ 29 states that things themselves are called ‘false’ by not being (πράγματα μὲν οὖν ψευδῆ οὔτω λέγεται . . . τῷ μὴ εἶναι . . ., 1024\textsuperscript{b}24–5). Here, then, is a clear case in which the false characterizes straightforwardly and literally things or their ways of being.

It is important to note, however, that the first half of Δ 29, from 1024\textsuperscript{b}17 to 1025\textsuperscript{a}1, is structured in terms of an antithesis between things (1024\textsuperscript{b}17–26), on the one hand, and accounts or statements (λόγος, 1024\textsuperscript{b}26–1025\textsuperscript{a}1), on the other. The initial part of the chapter focuses on a way of being false fundamentally different from that relevant to being true or false as a whole (introduced in E 4). The opening sentences of Δ 29 are not concerned with a way of being as a whole in which being is to be true while non-being is to be false. Nor are they concerned with a way of being governed by CP. Indeed they could not be since their subject-matter, what is false as a thing, is not definitionally dependent on affirmations and denials in the required way. These opening lines discuss another way of being false governed by different principles and applying to different objects. One might compare this latter use of ‘false’ with that found in the English expressions ‘false friend’, ‘false step’, ‘false turn’, or ‘false lead’, where the term ‘false’ is used to modify objects rather than propositions and is not governed by CP,\textsuperscript{13} and where the items designated do not depend for their existence on our combining objects in thought. (False friends or false turns can exist even if we never think of them as such.)

In Δ 29 the ground for external things (πράγματα) being called ‘false’ is that, as 1024\textsuperscript{b}20–1 and 24–5 make clear, they are non-obtaining items or non-existents (οὐκ ὄντα). But this way of being false (or this use of the term ‘false’) is distinct from the way of being true or false discussed in E 4. The way of being false discussed at the beginning of Δ 29 is one which belongs to items which are (in

\textsuperscript{13} Nor by any analogue of CP: while false friends may be the contraries of true friends, they are not their contradictories. Nor is any part of what it is to be a true friend definitionally dependent on the distribution of affirmations or denials.
some way) unreal or non-genuine. While there may well be (as we have just noted) legitimate uses of ‘false’ in Greek (as in English) which apply to objects (such as friends etc.), these are to be distinguished from the use which indicates the way of being for propositions, as set out in \( E \, 4 \). The way of being discussed in the first sentences in \( \Delta \, 29 \), unlike that in \( E \, 4 \), is not part of a whole way of being (being true or false) governed by CP and relevant to propositions. Aristotle, as was to be expected, does not refer to ‘true things’ in the key lines of \( \Delta \, 29 \), \( 1024^{b}17–26 \). Indeed, talk of truth and falsity enters \( \Delta \, 29 \) only when he talks of accounts or statements later in the chapter (\( 1024^{b}28, \, 36 \)). Nor should this surprise us: it is only to accounts or statements of this type that CP applies.

Aristotle, it should be noted, uses phrases which do not conform to the \( E \, 4 \) model not only in \textit{Metaphysics} \( \Delta \, 29 \), but also elsewhere in discussing the true. However, in the latter case, instead of using ‘true’ (\( \alpha \lambda \epsilon \theta ' \)s or \( \alpha \lambda \epsilon \theta \)́), the counterpart to his terms for ‘false’ (\( \psi \epsilon \nu \delta \oslash \) or \( \psi \epsilon \nu \delta \acute {\eta} \): \( 1024^{b}18, \, 20, \, 25 \)), he standardly uses the term ‘the truth’ (\( \check {\eta} \, \alpha \lambda \epsilon \theta \)́´) to signify the notion of truth as (external) \textit{reality}, or as \textit{the real} (external) \textit{thing}. Thus, at \textit{Metaph. A 3}, \( 984^{b}8–11 \), his predecessors are presented as being compelled by the truth itself to seek a further type of cause (\( \upsilon \pi \, \alpha \nu \tau \eta \acute {\acute {\eta}} \, \tau \acute {\acute {\eta}} \, \alpha \lambda \epsilon \theta \)́´as . . . \( \acute {\alpha} \nu \gamma \kappa \alpha \zeta \acute {\acute {\omicron}} \nu \) ). That this notion of the truth refers to external reality is clear from the parallel claim made earlier in \textit{A 3}, at \( 984^{a}16–19 \), where ‘the thing’ (\( \pi \rho \alpha \gamma \mu \alpha \)) itself paved the way for the further enquiry and compelled the earlier theorists to follow a certain route.\(^{14}\)

However, the natural conclusion to be drawn from these passages is not that things are (primary) truth-bearers. It is rather that there is a distinct notion of truth as external reality or the real thing, perhaps indicated (in English) by such phrases as ‘the truth will set us free’ or ‘the truth will always be concealed from us’. Propositional items may still be the truth-bearers notwithstanding the presence of these distinct, thing-laden uses of the terms ‘false’ or ‘the truth’. This is because, as already noted, truth-bearers are the entities to which being true or false \textit{as a whole} belongs (in a way constrained by CP).

It may be objected, at this juncture, that our claim that only propositional items are characterized by the \textit{whole} disjunctive phrase ‘true or false’ is vulnerable to a serious counter-example. One may

\[^{14}\text{This notion of truth as external reality, or as external objects(s), is also used clearly in \textit{Physics} i. 5 (188^{b}26–30} \text{ and } \textit{De partibus animalium} i. 1 (642^{a}13–20, \, 26–8).} \]
take a non-propositional item, such as a friend who is true or a lead which is false, and by the rule of disjunction characterize it using the whole disjunctive phrase ‘true or false’. Thus, for instance, if a friend is true, it follows by the rule of disjunction that he or she is either true or false. And if a lead is false, it follows (by the same rule) that this lead is false or true. This result (an objector would suggest) shows that our disjunctive characterization fails to single out propositional items as the only appropriate truth-bearers. This objection, however, is not sensitive to the idea that the way of being for a propositional item is either being true or being false. This is not the way of being appropriate to friends or leads. To be a friend (or a true friend) is (for example) to behave in a given way towards another person (the other friend). It is not a way of being which in its nature depends on affirmations or denials. Nor does it depend on the distribution of contradictory propositions.

To develop our disjunctive characterization it is necessary to set out Aristotle’s claim, made at E 4, 1027b18–23, about the whole (σύνολον) way of being which is to be true or false. Here is a possible formulation:

[A] There is a way of being and not being (i.e. being true and being false) which depends on our (thought) putting things together and dividing.

[B] The relevant putting together and dividing = affirmation and denial (not, for instance, wishing or ordering).

[C] Affirmations are true when they say of what is (in external reality) combined that it is combined and otherwise false, whereas denials are true when they say of what is (in external reality) divided that it is divided and otherwise false.

Hence

[D] The way of being and not being as a whole (i.e. being true and being false) is concerned with distributing contradictory propositions (as true or false).

The conclusion [D] follows from premisses [A]–[C] because [C] shows why affirmations and denials (which are invoked in [A] and [B]) are governed by CP: one of the contradictories is true, the other false.

This point can be put as follows: the way of being and not being (true or false) as a whole depends on distributions or apportion-
ments of contradictions. A true or false distribution or apportionment of a contradiction (in its nature) consists in affirmations or denials (propositional items) having certain relations to combinations or divisions of external things. Thus, the whole way of being or not being (being true or false) essentially depends on affirmations or denials (propositional items) having certain relations to external things. What it is for a true or false way of being to obtain, then, is for an affirmation or a denial to exist with certain relations to external things.

This essential dependence does not obtain in the case of (for example) true friends. It is certainly the case that, if a friend is true, then he or she is either true or false (or perhaps also ‘neutral’ or ‘just OK’) in virtue of the nature of disjunction. Yet it is not part of the nature of being a friend—not indeed of being a true, false, neutral, or just OK friend—that he or she involve an affirmation or a denial bearing certain relations to external things.

A similar case can be made in the case of external, real things, and the sense of truth as external reality: while one may apply the rule of disjunction and derive the claim that if an external thing is true (existent?), then it is either true (existent?) or false (non-existent?), it is not in the nature or the being of such an external thing to involve affirmations or denials with certain relations to external things. Indeed, this last idea seems nonsensical. What would this additional external world consist in, such that it would have certain relations with the affirmations or denials that the true or false external things allegedly involve in their nature?

It seems, then, that only affirmations or denials—propositional items—are involved in the distinctive way of being discussed in *Metaphysics E* 4 and elsewhere, i.e. being true or false. For only affirmations or denials could have the specific relations Aristotle ascribes to (combinations or divisions of) external things, and serve as distributions of contradictory pairs. For this reason, too, only affirmations or denials are governed by CP.

An objector might, at this juncture, cede that true or false external things are not in their nature such as to involve affirmations or denials having relations to yet another set of external things. But, the objector may nevertheless claim, this is exactly the reason why Aristotle reserves a ‘strict’ notion of truth or falsity for external things. They are true or false in a way which does not involve affirmations or denials having certain relations to external things; that
is, they are true or false but are not dependent on the distribution or apportionment of a contradiction.

On the most plausible statement of this view, affirmations or denials are made true or false by corresponding true or false external things. Thus, for example, a true external thing, an existing combination, makes a corresponding affirmation true; or the lack of a combination in external things makes a corresponding affirmation false. This way of ascribing truth or falsity to external things, however, makes two implausible assumptions. First, it assumes that there is a systematic connection between true or false external things and true or false affirmations or denials. But this is just to deny that Metaphysics E 4 sets out the main notion of truth or falsity, without any corresponding truth or falsity of external things. It is also to assume that there is a strict notion of truth or falsity applying to external things. Second, this view seems to conflate the notion of a truth-bearer, what is ‘true’ or ‘false’, with that of a truth-maker, what makes a truth-bearer true or false. Thus, the idea is that while affirmations or denials are true or false derivatively or non-strictly, external things are true or false primarily or strictly because they make the former true or false (hence, the derivative nature of truth or falsity for affirmations or denials). But in Metaphysics E 4 and elsewhere where Aristotle discusses truth or falsity he does not seem to make this confused move. Rather, he claims that true or false items (affirmations or denials) obtain because of there being external things in certain corresponding combinations or divisions, not because of there being true or false external things, or true or false external things in the primary or strict sense of ‘true’ and ‘false’.

The differences between the term ‘false’ (as deployed in the first section of Metaphysics Δ 29) and the term ‘the truth’ (as used in A 3 and elsewhere) suggest that the disjunctive characterization ‘true or false’, introduced in Metaphysics E 4 and also used in Δ 7, does not apply to external objects. First, in Δ 29 there is not even an allusion to any external thing which is to be called a ‘true thing’ and is the contradictory of the false thing mentioned. By contrast, when in this context Aristotle deals with false statements (λόγοι), he introduces the notion of a true account (1024b26–8). For, in his view, only these or other propositional items are characterized by the way of being which is to be true or false. Similarly, in A 3 and elsewhere where the notion of ‘the truth’ as external reality is used, there is no
counterpart ‘falsehood’ which would be the contrary to the ‘truth’. Aristotle’s focus on an isolated notion of either the ‘false thing’ or ‘the truth’, each taken by itself, indicates that external items are not the proper bearers of the canonical disjunctive characterization ‘true or false’. They are not Aristotle’s truth-bearers.\footnote{Crivelli offers a list of cases where he takes ‘true’ (and its cognates) to apply ‘to objects including states of affairs’ \cite[45 n. 1]{Truth} but does not offer an analysis of the instances outside \textit{Metaphysics} \text{A} \text{29}, \text{E} \text{4}, and \text{\Theta} \text{10}, which are central to his account and are discussed in this article. On closer inspection, one group of the other passages he cites (e.g. \textit{Cat.} 4\text{8}8–10, 4\text{b}11–13, 19\text{a}33, \textit{Metaph.} 1017\text{a}31–5) can readily be interpreted as comparing things in the external world and expressions (\textit{λόγος}) about them which are true or false. Another group appears (and is often taken) to be about opinions or propositions which are true, false, necessarily true, or known, etc. \cite[88\text{b}32–3, 89\text{a}2–3]{Post. An.}. The third group contains isolated uses of ‘the true’ (without the false) which are equivalent to ‘the truth’, referring to things in the external world \cite[1364\text{b}7–10]{Rhet.}. Crivelli offers no case (apart from those in \textit{Metaphysics} \text{E} \text{4} and \text{\Theta} \text{10}, which we discuss in detail) that could support the idea that the proper bearers of this way of being, exemplified by being true or being false and governed by CP, are external, mind-independent objects.}

1.3. Metaphysics \textit{\Theta} \text{10} in support of propositional truth-bearers

No treatment of the issue of Aristotle’s truth-bearers is complete without an examination of \textit{Metaphysics} \textit{\Theta} \text{10}. We shall discuss the problematic introductory lines of this chapter in Sections 3 and 4. In the present section we shall argue, as a first step towards engaging with these controversial lines, that the remainder of \textit{\Theta} \text{10} is fully consistent with the interpretation just given of \textit{\Delta} \text{4} and \textit{\Theta} \text{29}.

In most of the first part of \textit{Metaphysics} \textit{\Theta} \text{10} (concerned with ‘composites’ or ‘compounds’) Aristotle reserves the true and the false for propositional items, either linguistic items or mental states. At 1051\text{b}3–5 a person who thinks (\textit{ὁ οἰόμενος}) what is the case is thinking truly; at \text{b}7–9 either beliefs (\textit{διὰ τὸ ημᾶς οἴεσθαι}) or statements (\textit{οἱ φάντες}) are true. Similarly at \text{b}9–13, where Aristotle distinguishes between types of combination or division of \textit{things}, he does not ascribe the true or the false to any external, mind-independent items but uses only the notions of combination and unity, or non-combination and plurality, to characterize being and non-being (1051\text{b}12–13: τὸ μὲν εἶναι ἐστὶ τὸ αὐγκείσθαι καὶ ἐν εἶναι, τὸ δὲ μὴ εἶναι τὸ μὴ αὐγκείσθαι ἀλλὰ πλείω εἶναι). Immediately, when he returns to items which are true or false, he retains the terms ‘true’ and ‘false’ strictly for linguistic items and/or mental states (1051\text{b}13–14: ἡευδὴς καὶ ἀληθῆς δόξα καὶ ὁ λόγος; \text{b}15: ἀληθεύειν . . .
ψεύδεσθαι; cf. b16–17). This suggests that, in his considered view, the truth-bearers are propositional items, not external things or ways/types of being.

In the second part of the chapter (focusing on ‘incomposites’ or ‘simples’) Aristotle is at pains to distinguish their ways or types of being from that of linguistic items or mental states.

[T3] About the incomposites, now, what is being or not being, and what is the true and the false [τί τὸ ἐἶναι ἢ μὴ ἐἶναι καὶ τὸ ἀληθῆς καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος]? For it is not composite, so as to be when it is compounded, and not be if it is divided, such as the white log or the diagonal’s being incommensurable [ὡσπερ τὸ λευκὸν (τὸ) ἔξολον ἢ τὸ ἀσύμμετρον τὴν διάμετρον]; nor will the true and the false still obtain in a similar fashion in their case too [οὐδὲ τὸ ἀληθῆς καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος ὁμοίως ἔτι ὑπάρξει καὶ ἐπ’ ἐκεῖνοι]. Or rather just as truth is not the same in the case of these [the incomposites], so too neither is being the same [for the incomposites] [ὡσπερ οὐδὲ τὸ ἀληθῆς, ἐπὶ τούτων τὸ αὐτό, οὔτως οὐδὲ τὸ ἐἶναι], but truth or falsity is as follows, to grasp and to speak of them is truth (for affirmation and to speak of something are not the same), whereas to ignore is not to grasp them [ἀλλ᾽ ἐστι τὸ μὲν ἀληθῆς ἢ ψεῦδος, τὸ μὲν θυγεῖν καὶ φάναι ἀληθῆς . . ., τὸ δ᾽ ἀγνοεῖν μὴ θιγγάνειν]. (Metaph. Θ 10, 1051b17–25, our translation)

Consider Aristotle’s question at 1051b17–18: ‘in the case of incomposites, what is being or not-being, and [καὶ] the true and the false?’ The καὶ (usually translated as ‘and’) connecting being (ἐἶναι) and the true (or non-being (μὴ ἐῖναι) and the false) in this sentence may be taken in several ways, only one of which requires that the true and the false characterize things as opposed to propositional items. Hence, if the καὶ is epexegetic, Aristotle writes ‘being, i.e. the true’, and so implies that the true properly characterizes ways of being, or things. However, if the connective is taken as additive, being and the true would be two distinct items. Further, the καὶ may be additive with the import of result: ‘being, and hence the true’; ‘non-being, and hence the false’. In this reading, the idea would be that ways of being or things are separate from the true or the false even though the latter depend (in some way) on the former: because the ways of being are thus-and-so, this is why (as a subordinate result) the true is as it is.16 It is not necessary, given this background, to

16 This would fit well with the earlier claim, made at 1051b6–9, that linguistic items or mental states are true or false because of things being or not being in certain ways, but not the other way round. We shall come back to this point in sects. 2 and 3.
take this sentence as associating the true or the false directly with things in the external world. Indeed, given the preceding remarks, we have good reason not to do so.

The claim made about composites at 1051\textsuperscript{b}19–21 is clearly about things, and their being as a combination or as being combined, their non-being as a division or as being divided. However, this remark does not characterize these things (or their being) as being true or false. When Aristotle refers to the true and the false at \textsuperscript{b}21–2, he remarks only that they will not apply in the same way to composites and incomposites. However, this need only mean that linguistic items or mental states about composites are true or false in a way different from that in which linguistic items or mental states about incomposites are true or false (or more precisely: non-true). Indeed, the comparative construction (\textit{ὡςπερ οὐδὲ . . ., οὕτως οὐδὲ . . .}) used at 1051\textsuperscript{b}22–3 appears designed to insert the required gap between ways of being or things in the external world, on the one hand, and the true or the false, on the other. There is, no doubt, an important question as to which of these, if either, is prior. If there is an implication of priority, it does not seem that its direction will run from the true or false to being or non-being. Instead, given the truth-making claim made at 1051\textsuperscript{b}6–9, it is because being or non-being is as it is that the true or the false are as they are (and not conversely). However, even if there is no priority as between the two sides, the distinction between being and the true is clearly drawn. There is no reason to take the true or the false (non-true) to characterize composite or incomposite things.

The evidence in favour of taking propositional items (and not external, mind-independent things) as (the primary) truth-bearers becomes even stronger when Aristotle turns to the true and the false (or rather the non-true) as it applies to incomposites. In their case, grasping and speaking of (or saying) them is what the true consists in (1051\textsuperscript{b}24: τὸ μὲν θιγεῖν καὶ φάναι ἀληθὲς; 1051\textsuperscript{b}31–2; 1052\textsuperscript{a}1: νοεῖν). Grasping is a mental state, saying (φάναι) is a linguistic act (perhaps

\textsuperscript{17} It should be noted that the phrase τὸ μὲν ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος at 1051\textsuperscript{b}23 need not imply that truth or falsity as a whole applies to incomposites in the same way in which it holds of composites. Rather, we think that the phrase ‘the true or the false’ is a natural way for Aristotle to extend his treatment of truth and falsity to the case of incomposites. It is an added, separate claim (which he makes in the subsequent lines) that this notion applies differently to the case of incomposites. That is to say, in the case of incomposites there is only being as being true but there is no not-being as being false (although there may still be not-being as being not-true).
even an utterance). They are not external things or ways/types of being. In the case of incomposites the false is missing: we have in its place ‘to be ignoring or not grasping’ (1051b25: τὸ δ’ ἀγνοεῖν μὴ θυγγάνειν). Aristotle later maintains that there is no false (or mistake/deception) about incomposites, only ignorance (1052a1–3: ἁγνοΐα). It seems clear that this lack of truth characterizes not a thing in the external world but a mental state: ignorance.

This second section of *Metaphysics* Θ 10 closes with an important, if difficult, passage summarizing this chapter’s results about the true and the false as they apply both to incomposites and composites. This passage brings together several of the themes in the chapter and should be treated in some detail. Here is the text followed by a neutral translation (we shall discuss possible alternative construals shortly):

\[\text{T4} \]

\[\tauὸ \ δὲ \ εἶναι \ ως \ τὸ \ ἀληθὲς, \ καὶ \ τὸ \ μὴ \ ι \ \text{1051b}33\]
\[\varepsilonἰναὶ \ τὸ \ ως \ τὸ \ ψεῦδος, \ \varepsilonἰ \ μὲν \ ι \ \varepsilonστιν, \ \varepsilonἰ \ σύγκειται, \ \varepsilonληθὲς, \ τὸ \ δ’ \ εἰ \ μὴ \ σύγκειται, \ \varepsilonψεῦδος. \ \tauὸ \ δὲ \ ἐν, \ \varepsilonπερ \ ὅν, \ \varepsilonὔτως \ \varepsilonστίν, \ \varepsilonἰ \ δὲ \ μη, 20 \ \varepsilonὔτως \ εἰ \ ς \ \varepsilonστίν; \ \tauὸ \ \varepsilonδὲ \ \varepsilonληθὲς \ θὸ \ \varepsilonνεῖν \ ταύτα. \ \tauὸ \ \varepsilon1052a\]

18 Aristotle’s description of ways or types of being ὡς true, and non-being ὡς false, may imply that ways of being are only ‘as’ true/false, or merely treated as true/false, but are not such in their own right, or in any strict sense (see our interpretation of *Metaphysics* Δ 29 in sect. 1.2). Our present argument does not, in any way, depend on this reading. At any rate, the ὡς seems to be present in all the main manuscripts. What is uncertain is the presence and/or position of some articles τό.

19 Does the construction ἓν μὲν . . . τὸ δὲ ἐν at 1051b34–5 imply simply, as Ross suggests (*Metaphysics*, ad loc.), that Aristotle is listing a first and a separate, second case? Or are we to read into the occurrences of ἓν the important claims made earlier in the chapter (in connection with composites) about being and unity, and non-being and plurality (1051b11–13)? This last approach would confer a cohesive structure upon *Metaphysics* Θ 10: for at this later stage Aristotle would refer back to his view of being as unity (and non-being as plurality) not only as it applies to composites (as combination and division), but also as it is to be understood for incomposites (presumably as pure being or existence, or lack thereof). Ross’s proposal is more economical but does not offer such an elegant picture. Moreover, the parallel he finds at *Pol*. 3. 15, 1285b37–1286a2, involves a far smoother construction: Aristotle announces that his enquiry is about two questions (περὶ δύο), and then goes on to list each question (ἐν μὲν πάσην . . . ἓν δὲ πάσην . . .). Moreover, while the *Politics* phrasing is unproblematic as it reads ἓν μὲν . . . ἓν δὲ, *Metaphysics* Θ 10 has ἓν μὲν . . . τὸ δὲ ἐν, which is far from being a straightforward parallel, or a clear turn of connective phrase. While the unity reading seems attractive, we shall assume here Ross’s more economical rendering. At any rate, this question is independent of our main concerns.

20 Note that we punctuate the text here differently from Ross and Jaeger. They read 1052a1 as εἰ δὲ μὴ οὔτως, οὐκ ἐστίν, while we place a comma after the εἰ δὲ μη, and no comma after οὔτως. Nothing serious hangs on this way of punctuating. We do think, though, that if we assume (plausibly) that οὔτως at 1051b35 refers back to ἁληθι—
δὲ ψεῦδος οὐκ ἔστιν, οὐδὲ ἀπάτη, ἀλλὰ ἄγνοια. . . .

Being as the true, and non-being as the false, in one case [that of composites] is as follows, if something is combined, there is a true item, whereas if something is not combined, there is a false item; in the other case [that of incomposites], if indeed it is an [incomposite] being, it is in this way [i.e. it is true], but if it is not [an incomposite being], it is not in this way [i.e. it is non-true]; and the true [for the incomposites] is to grasp these; but there is no false for them, nor any mistake/deception, but [only] ignorance. . . . (Metaph. Θ 10, 1051b33–1052a2, our translation)

This passage is particularly telegrammatic. Some may worry that our translation distorts its grammar and that the shift of subjects we propose between the protases and the apodoses of the conditionals at 1051b34–1052a1 is somewhat awkward. However, on closer inspection, there is no such infelicity. Lines 1051b33–4 introduce the way of being and not being peculiar to propositional items, while b34–5 take up the case of composites. The subject of the protasis ‘if there is a combination’ (εἰ σύγκειται) is best rendered with an understood ‘something’ (τι) as a subject, an indefinite pronoun picking up a thing in the external world, a combination or a combined external item. Similarly, we take the subject of ‘if there is no combination’ (τὸ δὲ εἰ μὴ σύγκειται) to be an understood ‘something’ (τι), referring to an external item (a non-combination, or a non-combined plurality, after 1051b12–13). The apodoses (ἀληθές [sc. ἐστὶ] and ψεῦδος [sc. ἐστὶ]) can be taken either as impersonal—‘it is true (that) . . .’ and ‘it is false (that) . . .’—or as existential—‘there is a true/false item’. Either way, they refer to propositional items, precisely those to which the way of being or not being that is to be true or false applies. Indeed, this is precisely what is to be expected in the general context in which these sentences are embedded.

While the formulation at 1051b35–1052a1 is even briefer, it is susceptible to the same style of interpretation. The protases ‘if it is’ ἄληθες at 1051b34, we have the attractive result that while οὔτως ἐστίν at 1051b35 picks up the true for incomposites, οὔτως οὐκ ἔστιν at 1052a1 picks up the way in which there is no false but only non-true for incomposites: ‘it will not be thus, i.e. true’, i.e. it will be non-true. Compare DA 3.6, 430b26–7 and b26–30, for the claim that in the case of incomposites there is no false but (presumably) only non-true.

The ἄληθες [sc. ἐστὶ] in the apodosis could be taken either existentially, as in the translation just offered, or impersonally: ‘it is true’. A similar consideration applies to the apodosis at 1051b35 ψεῦδος [sc. ἐστὶ]: either ‘it is false’ or ‘there is a false item’ seems to be a fair translation.

21 The ἄληθες [sc. ἐστὶ] in the apodosis could be taken either existentially, as in the translation just offered, or impersonally: ‘it is true’. A similar consideration applies to the apodosis at 1051b35 ψεῦδος [sc. ἐστὶ]: either ‘it is false’ or ‘there is a false item’ seems to be a fair translation.
(εἴπερ ὄν) and ‘if it is not’ (εἰ δὲ μή) pick up incomposite (external) beings, and take an understood ‘something’ (τι) as their subject, while the apodoses ‘is thus’ (οὕτως ἐστίν) and ‘is not thus’ (οὐτως οὐκ ἐστίν) are about linguistic items or mental states (note that this reading of the negative apodosis assumes our punctuation but not Ross’s or Jaeger’s). It seems plausible to take the ‘thus’ (οὕτως) in both apodoses as referring back to the ‘true’ (ἀληθές) at 1051b34. The apodoses are to be understood, as before, either as impersonal (‘it is true’ or ‘it is not-true’) or as existential (‘there is a true item’ or ‘there is a non-true item’). Whichever reading is chosen, the apodoses will be about linguistic items or mental states: this is why at 1052a1–2 Aristotle clarifies ‘is thus’ (οὕτως ἐστίν) in terms of thinking (νοεῖν), and ‘is not thus’ (οὐτως οὐκ ἐστίν) in terms of ignorance (ἀγνοια).

There is no compelling reason, when one considers the two pairs of contrasting conditionals in this passage, to understand the protases and the apodoses as being about the same sort of item. It would be implausible to take both as ranging over (composite and incomposite) external, mind-independent things. Instead, the protases are best taken to be about external things, the apodoses about linguistic items or mental states concerning these external objects. Further, 1051b34–5 suggests that the subject-matters of the protases and the apodoses should be distinct items, most plausibly external beings and propositional items respectively. Hence, it seems preferable to take the ‘false’ as a propositional item, distinct from external things, in which there exists no corresponding combination or combined item. The same distinction applies to the (affirmative) true case: the combination or combined thing is distinct from the ‘true’. The former is an external, mind-independent entity, the latter a linguistic item or mental state.22

Aristotle’s summary, so understood, gives a clear picture of the true and the false in the case of composites:

[TC] An (affirmative) linguistic item, or an (affirmative) mental state about composites, is true if (and only if) there is a corresponding combination of things. [Truth for Composites]

[FC] An (affirmative) linguistic item, or an (affirmative) mental state about composites, is false if (and only if) there is not

22 We are indebted to Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra for this point.
Aristotle, in these remarks, is offering an account of the true and the false as characterizations primarily of propositional items in the style of a realist theory of truth. The left-hand sides of the two bi-conditionals, codifying the apodoses of the conditionals in the text, are about linguistic items or mental states, and are clearly registered as the (primary) truth-bearers (1051\textsuperscript{b}34–5: \textit{ἀληθές; \ψεῦδος}). The right-hand sides of these bi-conditionals, by contrast, encapsulating the protases of the conditionals in the text, concern ways of being or external things, their being combined or not combined (\textit{εἰ σύγκειται; \ εἰ μὴ σύγκειται}). It is in virtue of the latter that linguistic items or mental states are true or false.

Aristotle is committed to these bi-conditionals. In \textit{Categories} 12 he discusses the notion of priority by nature and holds that while the relata in this priority relation ‘reciprocate as to implication of being’, yet one of them is, in some way, the cause of the other’s being but not conversely (14\textsuperscript{b}11–13). Notably, the example is that of a true statement that ‘(some) man is/exists\textsuperscript{3}, and (some) man’s being or existing. These two items are taken as mutually reciprocating with regard to the implication of being (14\textsuperscript{b}14–18). This suggests that the one obtains just in case the other does, or that there is a bi-conditional or equivalence relation between the true statement and the corresponding external item. This supports our ‘if and only if’ interpretation above, which will remain correct even if there is an extra, asymmetric relation of priority of external, mind-independent items over statements or mental states, such that the latter are true because the former are but not the other way round (14\textsuperscript{b}18–22).

In the case of incomposites, however, there is no such combination or lack of combination. Instead, the protases in the text which describe external things are shaped in terms of existence or non-

\[\text{[TC–]}\text{ A negative linguistic item, or a negative mental state about composites, is true if (and only if) there is not a corresponding combination (or if there is a corresponding division) of things.}\]

\[\text{[FC–]}\text{ A negative linguistic item, or a negative mental state about composites, is false if (and only if) there is a corresponding combination (or there is not a corresponding division) of things.}\]

\textsuperscript{23} Aristotle does not offer the corresponding truth and falsity formulae for denials, but it is a trifling matter to supply them ourselves:
existence. It seems that either an incomposite is indeed an incomposite being (a fundamental metaphysical principle, such as an essence, or an imperishable, eternal actual being: 1051b26–7, 30–1; notice the use of εἴπερ at 1051b35, which we rendered as ‘if indeed’); or it is not at all—it does not exist as such a being. On the linguistic or mental side, however, we seem to have items which are ‘in this way’ or ‘not in this way’: in our view, these phrases are most plausibly taken as referring back to the ἀληθές at b34. If so, the apodosis ‘it is not so’ (οὐτὸς οὐκ ἐστὶν) at 1052a1 suggests that there is a non-true linguistic item or mental state. More precisely:

[TI] A mental state, grasping (νοεῖν), or a linguistic item (φάναι, 1051b24–5) about, an incomposite is true (and counts as a genuine case of θυγείν, νοεῖν, or φάναι) if (and only if) there indeed is a corresponding incomposite being. [Truth for Incomposites]

[NTI] A mental state or a linguistic item putatively about an incomposite is not true and is a case of ignorance if (and only if) there is no corresponding incomposite being. [Non-Truth for Incomposites]24

The left-hand sides of these bi-conditionals, mirroring the apodoses in 1051b35–1052a1, concern mental states: for in the immediately following clauses the true is specified as grasping (νοεῖν) and the non-true as ignorance (ἄγνοια). If this is correct, the incomposite external things [the subject-matter of the right-hand sides of the last two bi-conditionals, formulating the protases ‘if it is’ (εἴπερ ὄν) and ‘if it is not’ (εἰ δὲ μή: 1051b35–1052a1)] are not truth-bearers. Rather, ‘true’ and ‘non-true’ are primarily characterizations of mental states, grasping and being ignorant respectively. If so, in Aristotle’s view, both in the composite and in the incomposite cases, the (primary) truth-bearers are linguistic items or mental states.

In sum: in Metaphysics Θ 10, after its first controversial lines, propositional items play the role of truth-bearers. In Sections 3 and

24 In the case of incomposites there is no place for truth or non-truth involving the distinction between affirmation and denial (κατάφασις and ἀπόφασις): for in this case the relevant linguistic items or mental states do not display any affirmative or negative structure (1051b23–5: φάναι ... οὗ γὰρ ταὐτὸ κατάφασις καὶ φάσις). Rather, they are merely significatory expressions (φάσεις) or not significatory expressions at all (cf. De int. 4, 16b26 ff., 17b15–20; similarly, they are thinking/grasping (νοεῖν/θυγείν) or not grasping at all/ignoring altogether (μὴ θυγγάνειν/ἄγνοεῖν).
we shall argue that the first lines of *Metaphysics* Θ 10 (1051a34–b9) follow the same pattern. However, before doing so, we need to consider further Aristotle’s contention that the true and the false depend on how external things are (Section 2).

2. Further consideration of *Metaphysics* E 4

*Metaphysics* E 4 makes several claims about the dependency of being as being true and non-being as being false on how the external world is.

[T5] Let the enquiry into that which is accidentally, then, be put to the side (for it has been sufficiently discussed); but that which is as true and which is not as false, since they depend on combination and division [ἐπειδὴ παρὰ σύνθεσιν ἐστὶ καὶ διάφοροι], both taken as a whole are about the distribution of a contradiction; for the true takes the affirmation in the case of what is combined, and the denial in the case of what is divided, while the false takes the contradictory of this distribution (and how it comes to be that one grasps things together or separately is the topic of another study, but I mean ‘together’ and ‘separately’ such that they are not in succession but come to be some one thing); for the false and the true are not in things [οὐ γὰρ . . . ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν], as though the good were true, while the bad straightaway false, but are in [discursive?] thought [ἀλλ’ ἐν διανοίᾳ],

25 As noted earlier, we take the brackets to be around 1027b23–5 only: πῶς δὲ τὸ ἃμα . . . ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ γίγνεσθαι. For it is only this sentence which makes a parenthetical remark about how to understand the thought operations of combination and division (ἀμα and χωρὶς seem to pick up σύνθεσιν and διάφοροι from 1027b19, which in *Metaphysics* E 4 are understood as the thought operations of combining and dividing). This sentence also specifies that the issue of ἃμα and χωρὶς thinking does not fall within the scope of the present discussion, and refers to its proper treatment (presumably) in *DA* 3. 6. By contrast, the explanatory link between 1027b19–20 and 20–3 is too close, and should not be severed by introducing brackets before the γάρ clause at 20–3: for this clause seems to shed light on the difficult phrase τὸ δὲ σύνολον περὶ μερισμῶν ἀντιφάσεως at 19–20.

26 At 1027b25 E reads τὸ ψευδός τε καὶ τὸ ἀληθές, including a τε which we do not find in the other manuscripts. If we think that E is generally reliable and read this τε, we may suspect that at this point Aristotle splits up the way of being which is being true or false into two separate ways of being, that of being true and that of being false. If so, we may doubt whether he conceives being true or false as a unitary way of being. In our view, this is a minor point, which depends on what precisely we take as being split here: the ‘veridical’ way of being (something which would yield the undesirable consequence of lack of unity) or the true from the false? It seems fair to think that even if being true or false is one single way of being, Aristotle would still wish to retain the important distinction between truth and falsity, perhaps with truth being the positive and falsity the negative pole of this veridical way of being. Put differently:
whereas about the simples and the what-it-is not even in [discursive?] thought. What we must study about that which is and which is not in this way, let us examine later; but since the connection and the division are in [discursive?] thought but not in things, while that which is in this way is different from those which are in the basic/strict way \[τὸ δ᾿ οὕτως ὄν ἐτερον ὄν τῶν κυρίως\] (for it is either the what-it-is, or that it is of a certain quality, or that it is of a certain quantity, or some other such thing that [discursive?] thought connects or subtracts), let us leave to the side that which is as an accident and as true \[τὸ μὲν ὡς συμβεβηκὸς καὶ τὸ ὡς ἀληθὲς ὄν ἀφετέον\]—for the cause of the first is indefinite, while that of the second is a certain affection of [discursive?] thought \[τὸ γὰρ αἴτιον τοῦ μὲν ἀόριστον τοῦ δὲ τῆς δια- νοίας τι πάθος\], and both are about the remaining kind of being, and do not reveal that there is some additional nature of being \[ἄμφοτερα περὶ τὸ λοιπὸν γένος τοῦ ὄντος, καὶ οὐκ ἔξω δηλοῦσιν ὃ ἐστὶν τινα φύσιν τοῦ ὄντος\]—for this reason let us leave these to the side; but we must examine the causes and principles of this being [i.e. κυρίως being; cf. \[τὸ λοιπὸν γένος τοῦ ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ὄντος\] at 1028a1–2] in so far as it is \[ἁμφότερα περὶ τοῦ ὄντος αὐτοῦ τὰ αἴτια καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς τοῦ ὄντος\]. (Metaph. E 4, 1027b17–1028a4, trans. Kirwan, modified)

The claim about dependency in the first sentence involves the notion of depending on (παρά) at 1027b19.27 The idea is that being as being true and non-being as being false, or more precisely, affirmations and denials which are strictly speaking true or false (1027b20–2), are so derivatively from, or dependent on, combination and division. After noting that the true and the false are not features of external, mind-independent things but of thoughts (b25–7), Aristotle proceeds to point out that the type of combination and division involved is an operation effected by thought (1027b29–31: ἡ the way of being which is being true or false can still be unitary, as the way in which certain linguistic items or mental states are, even if truth and falsity are sharply distinguished (as, for instance, the positive vs. the negative poles of the veridical way of being). Thus, for example, the veridical way of being may possess a generic sort of unity, with being true and being false being two opposite poles of this unity. The latter two would not, of course, be distinct species of veridical being, for this would immediately undercut the unity of being true or false. Rather, being true would bear (for example) a certain type of relation to external reality, while being false would presumably bear the contrary relation to this reality. Compare with this case the sort of unity that being an animal possesses, and the way in which being male or being female are subsumed under being an animal, without being two species of it.

27 As noted earlier, we find promising Bonitz’s interpretation of παρά as ‘causal’, i.e. as expressing a relation of causal dependency of the way of being characteristic of propositional items (being true or false) on thought operations. The παρά is attested in all the main manuscripts; the variant περί is found only in a citation by Asclepius.
David Charles and Michail Peramatzis

συμπλοκή ἐστιν καὶ ἡ διαίρεσις ἐν διανοίᾳ, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐν τοῖς πράγμασι.

What thought does is to grasp external beings—an object’s being essentially thus-and-so, or its being of a certain quality, or its being of a certain quantity, etc.—and to keep them either connected or apart ($^b_{32–3}$: ανωπτεῖ ἡ ἄφαιρε ἡ διάνοια).

In Aristotle’s picture, the truth-bearers—affirmations or denials, or other linguistic items or mental states—depend, for their being true or false, on thought’s combining and dividing external things. A truth-apt (or truth-evaluable) item constrained by CP, such as a statement or a belief, depends on our thinking of beings as combined or divided: when one (mistakenly) combines in thought the square’s diagonal with being commensurate, one arrives at the statement or belief that the diagonal is commensurate, a propositional item which is false. Aristotle’s claim made at $^{1027b}_{34–1028^a1}$ seems to formulate precisely this idea: the cause of there being truth-bearers, true or false mental states, is the thought operations of combining and dividing beings ($τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸν . . . τοῦ δὲ [ἀληθοὺς καὶ τοῦ ψεῦδους; sc. οὕτως οὖν at $^{1027b}_{31}$, referring back to τὸ ψεῦδος καὶ τὸ ἀληθὲς at $^{b_{25}}$] τῆς διανοίας τι πάθος).$^{28}$

However, this is not the whole story. Thought and its operations of combining and dividing depend on there being things ($πράγματα$), specifically categorial beings, to be thought of as combined or divided. This additional dependence relation is signposted in the text first at $^{1027b}_{28–31}$. The phrase ‘being and not being thus’ ($οὕτως οὖν καὶ μὴ οὖν$) at $^{b_{29}}$ and $^{b_{31}}$ clearly refers to being-as-true and non-being-as-false: these are propositional items which are true or false. They are sharply distinguished from the basic or central cases of being, categorial beings such as a’s being essentially $F$, a’s being of a certain quality, a’s being of a certain quantity, etc. ($^{1027b}_{31}$: τὸ δ’ οὕτως οὖν ἐπεροῦν οὖν τῶν κυρίως, i.e. τὸ τί ἐστιν ἡ ὅτι σιοῦν ἡ ὅτι ποσὸν ἡ ἐὰν τι ἄλλο at $^{b_{31–2}}$). The view that categorial beings are the

$^{28}$ It may be objected that the claim that thoughts cause mental states to be or to exist may exclude thoughts from being themselves true or false. Alternatively, it may be suggested that thoughts are true or false, but they are so in a self-caused fashion: for they make themselves truth-bearers in their own right. In our view, neither of these two possibilities is compelling or plausible. This objection is defused once we draw properly the distinction between thinking—the thought operation of combining and dividing—and thought—the end product of thinking. While the former is a thought process or activity and so could not be characterized as true or false in any relevant manner (but perhaps as truth-aiming or truth-achieving), the latter is a mental state (e.g. what is believed, hoped, regretted, etc.: the object or content of a mental state) and so is true or false.
basic cases of being ($\kappaυρίως$) is unsurprising given the remark made in *Metaphysics* $\Delta$ 7 that categorial being is being in its own right ($1017^a$22–3: καθ’ αὑτά).

Aristotle does not rest content with this claim. Being-as-true and non-being-as-false (as well as accidental being) are not only different from but also dependent on categorial being. At $1028^a$1–2 he writes that both of these ways of being are *about* the rest of the ways of being: they depend on the ‘basic’ ($\kappaυρίως$), categorial way of being (and perhaps also categorial being as it is further modified by being potentially or being actually: ἀμφότερα περὶ τὸ λοιπὸν γένος τοῦ ὄντος). Similarly, the true and the false (as well as accidental being) do not reveal anything additional to categorial being; nor do they require that there exist any further nature of being over and above categorial being ($1028^a$2: οὐκ ἔξω δηλοῦσιν οὖσάν τινα φύσιν τοῦ ὄντος). It appears that here the true and the false are propositional truth-bearers, and depend on categorial being: they depend on it for their being true or their being false (as the case may be).

*In sum:* Aristotle’s overall view suggests the following picture:

**Level 3** Truth-bearers, linguistic items or mental states, which are products of level 2 operations (thought processes or activities) and are governed by CP, are, properly or strictly speaking, true or false.

**Level 2** Thought processes or activities, grasping external things as being connected/combined or as being divided/separated, yield level 3 items.

**Level 1** Categorial beings, external things, are objects which are or are not (essentially, necessarily, or accidentally) thus-and-so.

In this picture level 3 items depend on level 2 thought operations for their existence and nature as truth-bearers. Level 2 thought operations depend on level 1: they grasp external beings, and take them as being combined or divided. Assuming that the same dependence relation is used in both cases, it follows by transitivity that level 3 is ultimately dependent on categorial beings in the following two ways.$^{29}$ First, propositional items depend for their being truth-bearers on

$^{29}$ Why assume that this relation of dependence is the same across all three levels, and so warrants transitivity? One way in which to address this question is to take this relation as a type of causing, producing, or yielding graspable items. Thus, level 1 yields categorial beings, graspable items in the sense that they are to be grasped as being combined or being divided in level 2. Level 2 in turn yields propositional items
there being categorial beings for thought processes to grasp as combined or divided. Second, level 3 propositional items (resulting in this manner from level 2 combination or division in thought) depend for their being true or their being false (as the case may be) on whether the combination or division they involve or result from correctly describes, or fails to describe (respectively), the way in which categorial beings are combined or not combined (or divided). To this picture we could add a further, even more fundamental, level, taking our lead from 1028a2–4:

Level 0 Substances or/and essences are causes and principles of categorial being as such.

Aristotle urges us to leave aside the true and the false because its causes are thought operations. Further, it is dependent on categorial beings in the ways just suggested. What we should examine, by contrast, are the causes and principles of categorial being (in so far as it is a being).\(^\text{30}\) If we assume (plausibly) that *Metaphysics* Z 1 takes up precisely this task, it is reasonable to infer that the causes and principles of categorial beings are substances, or more accurately, the essences of these substances. This would establish a further dependence relation of the true and the false on Aristotle’s metaphysical bedrock: substances and essences.

3. The first lines of *Metaphysics* Θ 10: propositional truth-bearers as dependent on categorial being

*Metaphysics* Δ 7, E 4, and large parts of Θ 10 (as we have seen) strongly favour taking propositional items as Aristotle’s (primary) truth-bearers. Propositional items, the products of thought processes of combination and division, are dependent on categorial be-

or mental states in level 3, which themselves are graspable items. If so, level 1 indirectly yields the graspable items (propositional items or mental states) obtaining in level 3.

\(^{30}\) It is possible to translate 1028a3–4 as ‘we must examine the causes and principles of being itself qua being’, where the pronoun αὐτοῦ in the phrase τοῦ ὄντος αὐτοῦ does not repeat or refer back to κυρίως being, or τὸ λοιπὸν γένος τοῦ ὄντος and τοῦ ὄντος at 1028a1–2. Rather, so taken αὐτοῦ is a reflexive pronoun: ‘being itself’. There is no compelling reason to read the text in this way. Had the position of αὐτοῦ been before τοῦ ὄντος, it would have been more plausible to take the pronoun as reflexive. As it stands, though, we can render the pronoun as we have translated it: ‘we must examine the causes and principles of this being [just mentioned] qua being’.
ings for their being true or their being false. By contrast, categorial beings themselves are not truth-bearers.

Can this interpretation accommodate the introductory sentences of *Metaphysics* Θ 10? We shall argue that it can. These lines are best read as presenting external, non-mental, or mind-independent entities as playing the role of truth-makers (in the way in which level 1 entities are responsible for level 3 items), not that of truth-bearers. A careful reading of these sentences (in the best manuscript tradition) confirms the view that for Aristotle being true or false as a whole is not a property of external objects.

Our assumption, in what follows, is that interpreters should maintain the EJ text (the α text) where possible and regard the Ab text (the β text) as a ‘normalizing’ or ‘tidied-up’ version of the more basic α text. The interpretation we have developed in the previous sections accommodates, or so we shall argue, the α text in these lines in a straightforward manner while other interpretations fail to do so. There is no need to appeal to the β text (either in part or in whole) to interpret this passage. Indeed, it is misleading to do so, generating (as it does) surprising and counter-intuitive interpretations of Aristotle’s view of truth and truth-bearers.31

We shall first develop our interpretation of the key lines and then discuss alternative readings, influenced (in part or in whole) by the β text. The opening lines of the chapter run as follows (here we provide the α text, and our translation thereof):

\[\text{T6} \] 
\[\text{ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ ὄν λέγεται καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν τὸ μὲν κατὰ τὰ αὐχήματα τῶν κατηγοριῶν, τὸ δὲ κατὰ δύναμιν ἢ ἐνερ-
\[\text{γειαν τούτων ἢ τἀναντία, τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα εἰ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος, τοῦτο δ ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐστὶ τὸ συγκεῖσθαι ἢ} \]

We proceed on the following principle concerning the relevant books of the *Metaphysics* (from *Alpha Meizon* to *Iota*): in phrases preserved in both α and β texts, where the actual wording differs in the α and β texts, prefer the α reading unless the divergence can plausibly be traced back to clearly mechanical failure in the α family or comments (α supplements) which have been introduced from the margin into the text. This principle is based on recent work by Oliver Primavesi and his team. Primavesi defended the hypothesis (O. Primavesi, ‘Introduction: The Transmission of the Text and the Riddle of the Two Versions’, in C. Steel (ed.), *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Alpha* (Oxford, 2012), 387–404) that the β text has been revised, between AD 200 and AD 400, by someone who used Alexander and Μ 4–5 as a source for easier formulations in difficult passages. In the α text, by contrast, the original wording has not been subjected to intentional rewriting, although marginal comments have, on occasion, been introduced into the text (α supplements). Primavesi’s proposal has been confirmed for books *Alpha Elatron* to *Delta* in a Munich dissertation by Mirjam Kotwick (successfully defended in January 2014).
διῃρῆσθαι, ὥστε ἀληθεύει μὲν ὁ τὸ διῃρημένον οἴομεν διῃρῆσθαι καὶ τὸ συγκείμενον συγκεῖσθαι, ἐδεικνυται δὲ ὁ ἐναντιόν ἔχον ἢ τὰ πράγματα, ποτέ ἐστιν ἢ οὐκ ἐστι τὸ ἀληθὲς λεγόμενον ἢ λεγόδος; τούτῳ γὰρ σκεπτέον τι λέγομεν, οὐ γὰρ διὰ τὸ ἡμᾶς ἀείσθαι ἀληθῷς σε λευκὸν εἶναι εἰ ὡς λευκός, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ σε εἶναι λευκὸν ἥμεις οἱ φάντες τούτῳ ἀληθεύομεν.

Since being and non-being are said in one way according to the figures of the categories, in another in respect of potentiality or actuality of these, or of their contraries, and [being is said] in the strictest way if [something] true or false [is said of/about it],\(^\text{32}\) and this on the side of things is for them to be combined or to be divided in such a way that one who holds that what is divided is divided and what is combined is combined speaks truly, whereas one who holds items contrary to how things stand speaks falsely, when is it that what we call true or false obtains? For we must examine what is meant by this. For it is not because we hold truly that you are pale that you are pale, but because you are pale that we who say this speak truly. (Metaph. ᘟ 10, 1051\textsuperscript{b}34–\textsuperscript{b}9, our translation)

The main differences between the α and the β texts are at 1051\textsuperscript{b}1–3. In the α text just cited and our translation for these lines we read:

α (EJ) τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα [sc. ὦν or λεγόμενον ὄν] εἰ ἀληθὲς ἢ λεγόδος, τούτῳ δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐστι τὸ συγκεῖσθαι ἢ διῃρῆσθαι.

and [being is said] in the strictest way if [something] true or false [is said of/about it], and this on the side of things is for them to be combined or to be divided.

On the other hand, β reads as follows:

β (Ab) τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα ὄν ἀληθὲς ἢ λεγόδος, τούτῳ δὴ ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐστι τῷ συγκεῖσθαι ἢ διῃρῆσθαι.\(^\text{34}\)

Here is a fairly innocuous translation of the β text (we shall discuss various alternative construals in Section 4):

\(^{32}\) The conditional clause could also be translated as follows: ‘if [being] is [said to be] true or false’. As we shall explain shortly, this last translation is to be understood in the following way: ‘being is said in the strictest way if it is itself (said to be) true or false’ in that something true or false (a propositional item) is said of or about it.

\(^{33}\) At 1051\textsuperscript{b}2, instead of the ἐπὶ we find in α, we get an ἐτί in β; we shall ignore this reading (as it makes no good sense of the sentence) and treat β as though it too included an ἐπὶ.

\(^{34}\) At this point we are indebted to Oliver Primavesi for sharing his work in progress on the manuscripts of Metaphysics ᘟ 10, as well as E 4.
Aristotle on Truth-Bearers

and being in the strictest way is true or false, so this in the objects obtains as a result of their being combined or divided.

The β text is accepted (with one minor change) by most modern editors, including Bonitz, Christ, Ross, and Jaeger. Our initial aim is to give a philosophically plausible reading of the α text.

Aristotle introduces categorial being as the first way of being, and being potentially and actually as the second. The manner in which he formulates the second case refers back to categorial being: being potentially or being actually are presented as extra modifications of the ways of being in which categorial beings are or are not (1051\(\alpha\)35–b1: τούτων ἢ τὰναντία, where the demonstrative pronoun refers back to τὰ σχῆματα τῶν κατηγοριῶν at 1051\(\alpha\)34–5). This is in line with his practice in Metaph. Δ 7, 1017\(\alpha\)35–b2, where he refers back to categorial being when introducing being potentially and actually.

This back-reference to categorial being suggests a promising way in which to understand 1051\(\beta\)1–2. The idea is that ‘the strictest way of being’ (κυριώτατα [ὁν or λεγόμενον ὄν]) signifies what ‘is in itself’ or ‘as such’ (καθ ᾿ αὑτά) does in Δ 7 (1017\(\alpha\)22–3), or what ‘strictly is’ (κυρίως) does in Ε 4 (1027\(\beta\)31–2): categorial being.

There is no need, if this is correct, to take Aristotle to be focusing here on senses (or uses) of the verb ‘to be’, or as holding that the veridical use is somehow basic. He can be talking about what is in the external world. Nor is it necessary to take ‘strictly’ (κυριώτατα) as part of the phrase ‘being true or false’ (ὁν ἄληθες ἢ ψεῦδος), introducing the ‘strictest’ sense of ‘true’ and ‘false’, one which applies to things as opposed to propositional items. Instead, Aristotle is taking categorial being as basic or central, as he standardly does, and pointing to an additional connection between it and being true or false.

What is the nature of this last connection? In the preferred α text, Aristotle writes ‘and [being is said] in the strictest way if [something] true or false [is said of/about it]’. In a different, perhaps more natural, reading, this last conditional clause could be rendered as follows: ‘if being or non-being is said to be true or false’ in the sense that some propositional item which is true or false is said of or about some (categorial) being. In this text, categorial being is not, properly speaking, called true or false. Nor does Aristotle identify this basic way of being with the true or the false. Instead, categorial

35 We shall consider other interpretations of these lines in the following section.
being is the basic way of being which is said to be present in cases where there are true or false propositional items which describe it. So understood, these lines are fully consistent with the thesis (developed by Aristotle elsewhere) that being true or false is not the basic way of being and does not characterize external things. Aristotle is focusing on things ‘said in line with the categories’. From this perspective, the most relevant basic case is one in which several categorial beings are compounded or divided. This case will obtain if (and only if) something true or false is said.

The second key to this passage is given in 1051b1–2. The α text reads: τοῦτο δ’ ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἔστι τὸ συγκεῖσθαι ἢ διῃρῆσθαι. In these lines, Aristotle is often understood as taking being true or false as a feature of things, and as identifying it with things’ being combined or being divided. Clearly, if we hold that the reference of ‘this’ (τοῦτο) is back to ‘true or false’ (ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος) and not to the strictest (κυριώτατα) way of being, it is natural to think that the strictest way of being, categorial being itself, is to be understood as true or false given certain conditions. The phrase will mean: ‘this, the true or the false, is things’ being in certain ways’. However, as we have seen, this way of interpreting the passage is not required by the α text. As our translation suggests, a natural reading is to take

On our reading, categorial being will include such items as Socrates, the healthy one, being healthy. These items will be presented under the guise of the propositional items which describe them: for instance, Socrates+being healthy when seen from the viewpoint of (e.g.) the predicative statement ‘Socrates is healthy’. Aristotle continues to maintain that categorial being is the strictest or most basic way of being. To use the examples provided in Metaphysics Δ 7: the categorial beings Socrates and being healthy (or Socrates’ being healthy) will be present when represented or described by expressions such as ‘Socrates is healthy’ (1017a33–5). It may be objected that Aristotle cannot be taking categorial being to be combined or divided, as our view allows him to be doing. This objection may be fair if one focuses exclusively on categorial being as introduced and discussed in parts of the Categories. In that context the categories are items which are ‘without combination’ (ἀνεύ συμπλοκῆς: Cat. 2, 1a16–17, 18–19; 4, 1b25 ff.). But in the Metaphysics, and specifically in Θ 10, as well as Δ 7 and E 2–4, Aristotle does not use the notion of κατηγορία by itself. Rather, he frames his claims in terms of the concept of τὰ σχήματα τῶν κατηγορίων. The former way of speaking of categorial beings picks up items of the form (being) F, whereas the latter also allows for items such as x’s being (or not being) F. The idea that categorial beings are combined or divided items seems to underlie the examples offered in Metaph. Δ 7, 1017a27–30, and E 4, 1027b31–2: the healthy human or a human’s being healthy; the walking human or a human’s walking; what something is; that it is of such a quality; that it is of such a quantity. At any rate, the external things about which true or false propositional items obtain are combined or divided categorial beings of this sort. They are not the referents of just the subject or just the predicate terms of propositional items.
'this' (τοῦτο at 1051b2) as picking up not ‘being true or false’ (ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος at 1051b1–2) but the whole phrase ‘the strictest case of being is present, if something true or false is said of/about it’ (τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα εἰ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος at 1051b1–2). So understood, ‘this’ does not refer to a true or false item said of/about a thing but to the strictest case of being—categorial beings—about which something true or false is said. These clauses, as a whole, say: ‘and [being is said] in the strictest way if [something] true or false [is said of/about it], and this [i.e. the strictest case of being] on the side of things is for them to be combined or to be divided’. The outcome of this reading is clear: for anything to be true or false of/about the [relevant] strictest case of being, categorial being, there have to be certain combinations or divisions of external things. External things are not the truth-bearers but the truth-makers for any item which is, strictly speaking, true or false. The latter are propositional items said of or about external objects.  

The interpretation just sketched has considerable merits. First, it takes and makes good sense of the α text in its entirety, without invoking any elements from the problematic β text. All alternatives ‘cherry-pick’ at this juncture and none retains (as we have done) the α text in its entirety. Second, our reading maintains the Aristotelian thesis that categorial being is the basic or central way of being: for, in our interpretation, the strictest case of being (κυριώτατα [ὁν or λεγόμενον ὃν]) clearly is identified with being ‘in accordance with the figures of the categories’. In this way, the introductory lines of Metaphysics Θ 10 agree with the characterization of categorial being as being ‘in itself’ or ‘as such’ (καθ’ αὑτά) in Δ 7 and, more importantly, as the ‘strict’ or ‘basic’ being (κυρίως) in E 4. Third, in our account, truth or falsity are introduced using the subordinate conditional clause ‘if anything true or false is, or is said, of/about the strictest case of being’ (εἰ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος at 1051b1–2). So understood, Aristotle places an appropriate gap between external things (the strictest way of being, categorial being) and his truth-bearers. While the latter, which are true or false, are (said) of or about external objects, they are not identical with them.  

There is a fourth advantage. The presence of the subordinate
conditional clause (on the basis of the εἰ found in the α text) allows for several ways to secure a reference of the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο at 1051b2 without taking it to latch onto being true or false. In the simpler possibility already noted, the conditional clause interrupts the main clause ‘being in the strictest case...’, and so the ‘this’ refers back to the subject-matter of the main clause, the strictest way of being (categorial being). Alternatively, the conditional clause is indeed the referent of ‘this’ but the phrase ‘for things’ (ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων) serves to shift the reference back to the strictest way of being (‘this, being true or false, from the side of things is...’). Whichever alternative is preferred, the result remains the same: ‘this’ refers back to the strictest way of being, categorial being, and introduces the innocuous and unsurprising claim that this way of being is somehow closely linked to things’ being combined or divided. It does not render external things (primary) truth-bearers. For something (e.g. ‘being cultivated’) to be true of the categorial being Socrates is for the two relevant things, Socrates and being cultivated, to be combined. For something (e.g. ‘being pale’) to be false of the categorial being Socrates is just for the two things, Socrates and being pale, to be divided. This is why Aristotle returns (at 1051b3–5) to being true or false, and describes what it is for an affirmation or a denial to be true or false, given that things (categorial beings) are combined or divided in the ways outlined at b2–3. Importantly, to allow for the possibility of complex, combined or divided, categorial beings Aristotle uses (in this chapter but also in Metaphysics Δ 7 and E 2–4) the notion of τὰ σχήματα τῶν κατηγοριῶν, which seems to contrast with the simple κατηγορία, a notion which does not seem to allow for any combination or division (as it is an item ἀνεν συμπλοκῆς: Cat. 2, 1a16–17, 18–19; 4, 1b25 ff.).

The fifth advantage of our interpretation is that it allows for two ways (matching those mentioned in the previous paragraph) in which to understand the relation expressed by the phrase ‘is for things’ (ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐστί at 1051b2). If the reference of τοῦτο at 1051b2 is to the strictest way of being, we can readily accommodate the identity reading of ‘to be’. So understood, Aristotle would be identifying external beings—the strictest case of being, categorial being, when something true or false is said of them—with things’ being combined or divided. This is unproblematic: if something true or false is said of categorial beings, the latter are combined or divided. Further, even if ‘this’ were to refer to being
true or false, we could understand the phrase ‘this is for things to be. . .’ as itself meaning ‘being true or false (partly) consists in, or depends on, things’ being combined or divided’. So understood, this phrase (τὸῦτο δ' ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐστὶ) would serve to emphasize the relation of being true or false to things, and the dependence of the former on the latter: ‘this, being true or false, in respect of what is required of things, is . . .’.38 We do not need to choose between these differing construals: whichever is preferred, the claim made at 1051b2–3 is about the relation which obtains between external things and true or false items corresponding to them. It specifies that the latter’s being true or false depends on external things, their combination or division. This way of understanding 1051b2–3, in terms of a truth-making claim, affords an elegant transition to 1051b3 and the following lines. Initially, in lines b3–5 Aristotle focuses on the relation between linguistic items or mental states and combinations or divisions of things. Second, in lines b5–6 he raises a question about the conditions under which being true or false obtains: this is a question about the underlying truth-makers responsible for propositional truth-bearers. Finally, at b6–9 he clarifies that his main focus in the present context is on the truth-makers in virtue of which our beliefs or statements (the appropriate truth-bearers) are true or false.

In this interpretation, the dependency of being true or false (as a characterization of propositional truth-bearers) on things is encapsulated in the ‘thus’ (ὥστε) clause at 1051b3–5. Because true or false linguistic items or mental states depend on things, it follows (ὥστε) that a belief, the mental state of a believer (οἰόμενος), is true or false (ἀληθεύει μὲν . . . ἔψευσται δὲ) depending on whether it describes how things stand, or not (respectively). A belief which takes combined things to be combined, or divided things to be divided, is true, whereas a belief that takes things contrary to how they are is false. If 1051b3–5 is understood in this way, we get a picture which fits exactly with the account of truth for composites formulated in Section 1.3 on the basis of Metaphysics Θ 10, 1051b33–1052a1:

[TC'] A linguistic item or mental state (see the οἰόμενος of 1051b3) is true if and only if the combination it posits (in an affirmation) or the division it posits (in a denial; see the διῃρῆσθαι and συγκεῖσθαι of 1051b3–4) describes how

38 Once again the former alternative may be preferred on grounds of simplicity.
external things are combined or divided (see τὸ διῃρημένον and τὸ συγκείμενον of 1051b3–4). But the former is true because of the latter being as they are, and not conversely. (This last point reflects the asymmetric truth-making claim made at 1051b6–9.)

[FC'] A linguistic item or mental state is false if and only if the combination it posits (in an affirmation) or the division it posits (in a denial) is contrary to how external things are combined or divided, i.e. if and only if it fails to describe how external things are combined or divided. But the former is false because of the latter being as they are, and not conversely. (Again this last claim is derived from 1051b6–9.)

What the present formulations add to our earlier [TC] and [FC] is, first, a more precise characterization of what external things involve (things’ being combined or being divided), and what the relation between this external side and the propositional side consists in (taking combined things as combined, and divided things as divided). This is a significant addition: it brings Aristotle’s present, more sophisticated account of the true and the false into line with the common-sense realist account, in which the true says that ‘what is’ is, or that ‘what is not’ is not, whereas the false says that ‘what is not’ is, or that ‘what is’ is not. Indeed, this is exactly how Aristotle himself defines the true and the false in a straightforward manner at Metaph. Γ 7, 1011b25–8.

There is a further, substantive, claim added by [TC’] and [FC’] in the present section of Metaphysics Θ 10. This addition is about the side of the bi-conditionals concerned with external things. In Section 1.3 we suggested that on the basis of Categories 12 the account of truth is best understood in terms of bi-conditionals such as [TC] and [FC]. Thus, we understood the position developed in the opening lines of Metaphysics Θ 10, too, in a similar fashion, as codified in [TC’] and [FC’]. For this sort of formulation captures the claim made at Categories 12, 14b14–18, that true statements and external items corresponding to them ‘converse’ or ‘mutually reciprocate as to implication of being’. Bare bi-conditionals, however, fail to capture the further claim made in Categories 12 concerning the natural priority of external items over true statements corresponding to them: the former, their being, obtaining, or being the case,
are somehow the cause for the latter’s being true, while the converse does not hold good (14b18–22). This priority claim is mirrored in the truth-making role that external things, their being combined or being divided, serve in the present context of *Metaphysics* Θ 10. This first becomes clear from our reading of the sentence ‘this is for things to be combined or divided’ at 1051b2–3 as set out earlier: being true or false (said about categorial being) requires or depends on things’ being combined or divided, while combinations or divisions of things do not, in any comparable manner, require or depend on being true or false. The ‘not conversely’ clause is not added in this sentence but is explicitly present at 1051b6–9: it is because you are pale that our belief that you are pale is true, but not the other way round.

To conclude: a detailed reading of 1051a34–b9 shows that these lines (in the α manuscript tradition) support the philosophically plausible view, which Aristotle holds elsewhere: propositional items, not external, mind-independent objects, are what is true or false. There is nothing in these lines to make us accept that Aristotle here departed from his standard view, as expressed elsewhere and in the remainder of *Metaphysics* Θ 10, and held—for two short lines—that objects in the external world are to be described by the whole disjunctive phrase ‘true or false’.

4. Some alternatives considered

To confirm the interpretation offered in the previous section, we shall consider alternative views, inspired (in part) by departures from the α text. While, in our view, they are all—without exception—problematic, we shall focus on two recent, high-grade proposals.

As noted earlier, the β text is often an attempt to improve on the α text, either grammatically or philosophically (or both). The β text of the relevant lines is as follows:

\[ \beta \text{(Ab) } \tauὸ \ δὲ κυριῶτατα ὅν \ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος, \tauῷ \ δὴ ἐπὶ \ τῶν \ πραγμάτων \ \varepsilon \tau \ τῷ \ συγκεῖσθαι \ ἢ \ διῇρησθαι. \]

One can see how this text might have arisen from an intelligent

---

39 Here we omit the ἐν of the β text and adopt the ἐπὶ of the α text. A neutral translation of these lines of the β text was provided in sect. 3.
scribe’s misgivings about the α text. He [let us call him ‘B’] was unhappy about the highly elliptical τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα in the α text:

\[ \text{α (EJ)} \quad \tauο\ ν δὲ κυριώτατα εἰ \ άληθὲς \ ή ψεύδος, τούτο δὲ \ ηπί τών πραγμάτων \ έστιν τὸ \ συγκεῖσθαι \ ή διηρήθαι, }^{40} \]

not seeing that the first three words should be spelt out as ‘what is [said] most strictly to be [is present]’. As a result, he thought that the initial clause had to be supplemented with an explicit subject as in ‘what is most strictly’ (τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα ὅν) to form a genuine subject, and replaced ‘if’ (εἰ) with ‘being’ (ὅν) to do so. As a result, the phrase ‘true or false’ (ἄληθὲς ή ψεύδος) was naturally taken as the predicate. So interpreted, the whole clause said that what is in the basic case is to be identified with what is true or false. His conclusion (although welcome to later philosophical radicals such as Heidegger) may have seemed to B to conflict with Aristotle’s standard doctrine, in which propositional items (and not things in the external world) were true or false. When he spotted this difficulty, he emended the next clause to maintain Aristotle’s standard doctrine. He wrote τοῦτο δὴ ἐπί τῶν πραγμάτων ἔστι τῷ συγκεῖσθαι ἡ διηρήθαι. His emendation involved two moves: the first was to read δὴ rather than δέ, to take the connective as meaning ‘in truth’ or ‘indeed’, which allowed him to take the whole clause as restating in a more accurate or preferable form what had been stated (somewhat misleadingly) in the previous one. The second was to introduce τῷ instead of τῷ at 1051b2, interpreting the whole clause as saying that truth or falsity depends on things being combined or divided (perhaps inspired by the prepositional phrase of causal dependency παρὰ σύνθεσιν καὶ διαίρεσιν at E 4, 1027b19). In the revised text, Aristotle is not identifying truth and falsity with things in the external world. In fact, he is explicitly rejecting this view and, by reformulating the claim at 1051b1, making truth and falsity dependent on things in the external world (in line with his usual doctrine). So understood, the β text arises partly from grammatical perplexity over the phrase found in the older, α reading τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα εἰ \ άληθὲς \ ή ψεύδος (due to B’s failure to see the elliptical reading suggested above) and partly from an understandable desire to make this passage consistent with Aristotle’s views elsewhere. Given this genealogy of the β text, we should turn to it only if we are unable to read the α text in a way which is consistent with Aristotle’s claims elsewhere. It is impor-

---

40 These lines of the α text were translated in sect. 3, in our [T6].
tant to emphasize that there is no comparable account of the route from the β text to the more elliptical α text reading: τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα ἐὰν ἄληθες ἢ ψεῦδος.

While interpreters who wish to find in these lines a view of truth consistent with Aristotle’s account elsewhere rely on the β text, they do not defend it when it departs from the α text. Giles Pearson exemplifies this approach, accepting the β text at crucial points without considering (or supporting) its distinctive readings. However, this strategy is vulnerable to criticism by those who claim that his style of interpretation can be made to work only on the basis of the β text, which they see as having probably been devised to support precisely the type of interpretation Pearson (and we) favour. This is why, for example, in their view, the β text replaces the nominative at 1051b2 with a dative to make ‘truth-as-being’ arise because of things’ being composed and divided.

In contrast with Pearson’s account, interpreters aware of the general strengths of the α manuscript tradition have sought to follow it as closely as possible, even when it leads them to attribute to Aristotle views about truth which are either in tension with his account elsewhere or philosophically counter-intuitive (or both). Paolo Crivelli seeks (as we do) to defend the majority of the α text. However, we diverge on one crucial point: he replaces the ‘if’ (εἰ) of the α text at 1051b1 with ‘being’ (ὁν), following the β text. This seemingly small emendation leads him to a radical conclusion: Aristotle here commits himself to external truth-bearers, modifying or correcting what he said elsewhere. On this view, being true or false is straightforwardly a characterization of external things, presumably objects which are combined or divided (or which consist of combinations or divisions). In Crivelli’s view, the relevant external entities are states of affairs. He understands the difficult phrase at 1051b1 in the β text, τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα ὅν ἄληθες ἢ ψεῦδος, to speak of a strict, or the strictest, notion of truth and falsity.

We do not accept Crivelli’s construal of the τοῦτο at 1051b2 as referring to ἄληθες ἢ ψεῦδος at 1051b1–2. As we have shown above, if one retains the α text in its entirety (with the ‘if’ (εἰ) at 1051b1),

---

42 Crivelli, Truth.
43 We shall not discuss at all this last part of Crivelli’s view.
44 Pearson suggests, without endorsing, a similar understanding of this phrase (‘Being-as-Truth’, n. 16): ‘that which is most properly called truth or falsity’. By contrast, Heidegger (Grundbegriffe, 168, 305–6) identifies what is in the strictest sense with what is true.
‘this’ can be taken (in the simplest reading) to refer back to what is [said] in the strictest way\textsuperscript{45} and identified (in the case of complexes such as Socrates plus being healthy) with the objects in question being combined or divided. There is no need, on the basis of this passage, to attribute to Aristotle a new way of being true and false which straightforwardly characterizes external objects.

Crivelli’s proposal faces an immediate difficulty: since the concept of truth or falsity deployed in \textit{Metaphysics E 4} applies to thoughts and not to things, it is unlike the one mentioned here (on Crivelli’s reading). His response is to suggest that \textit{Metaphysics E 4} is referring not to the strictest notion of truth (introduced at 1051\textsuperscript{b}2–3) but to a looser one which applies to thoughts but not to things. In this way, the clash between \textit{Metaphysics E 4} and \textit{Θ 10} is only apparent: for the earlier chapter claims only that a ‘looser’ notion of truth or falsity does not belong to things, whereas the later chapter holds that the ‘strictest’ notion of truth or falsity does indeed belong to things.

Crivelli’s ingenious suggestion has several disadvantages. First, on his view, while the strictest notion of truth or falsity applies to things, the looser one (which applies to thoughts, statements, mental states, etc.) does not apply to things at all. Hence, he has to maintain that in Aristotle’s view \(x\) can be strictly speaking true or false, without \(x\) being true or false. This result, however, seems not only counter-intuitive in its own right but also contrary to Aristotle’s standard practice: for he normally holds that if \(x\) is strictly speaking \(F\), then it is also \(F\) (non-strictly speaking), whereas the converse is not the case.\textsuperscript{46} Second, it is unclear why Aristotle here (on this one occasion) would have introduced a new demanding sense of truth and falsity with no apparent similar uses of this notion (as a disjunction) elsewhere. It appears to emerge unmotivated in the present context (see also the fourth concern below).

Crivelli’s proposal is not without its philological difficulties. The presence of a connective (whether \(\delta\epsilon\) or \(\delta\eta\)) at 1051\textsuperscript{b}2 is surprising.

\textsuperscript{45} There is, however, another possibility (as mentioned above): even if the conditional clause is indeed the referent of ‘this’, the phrase ‘for things’ (ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων) serves to shift the reference back to the strictest way of being (‘this, being true or false, from the side of things is . . .’).

given that Crivelli thinks that what comes next, things’ combination or division, is identical with the strictest notion of truth and falsity (i.e. the subject-matter of the preceding clause, τὸ δὲ κυριῶτατα ὃν ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος). One would not have expected to find a connective here at all. Further, it is difficult to understand 1051b1–2 as supporting the reading of κυριῶτατα ὃν as qualifying ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος, and as introducing the ‘strictest’ notion of truth or falsity. For the previous clauses had been concerned with ‘being’, not with looser senses of truth. On Crivelli’s view, Aristotle moves directly from talking of being to talk of truth without any sign of introducing a new topic.

Our interpretation avoids all these difficulties. In adopting the α text in its entirety, we do not ‘cherry-pick’ (as Crivelli does) some and only some parts of that text. Second, our reading of ‘if true or false’ (εἰ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος) allows us to see this text as fully consistent with Aristotle’s standard doctrine elsewhere: propositional items are the prime bearers of what is true or false. There is no tension to resolve with Metaphysics E 4. Third, our reading (as noted above) makes good sense of the contrastive δέ in 1051b2, contrasting truth and falsity as properties of propositions with things in the external world. Finally, there is no startling (and unannounced) change of subject from talk of being to talk of what is in the strictest way true or false, cutting these clauses off from what precedes.

To conclude: since the α text (in its entirety) makes good philosophical sense, there is no reason—in terms either of philosophical gain or of philological conservatism (faithfulness to the best manuscript tradition etc.)—to move away from it (at this point). Indeed, all attempts to introduce aspects of the β text (whether wholesale or in part) give rise to serious philosophical or exegetical problems of their own. The α text, then, should be retained (at this point) in its entirety. Further, we have shown how, in this case, the β text may have arisen through the (misguided) ingenuity of an acute and philosophically informed scribe. The distinctive features of the α text, by contrast, are clearly not the results of purely mechanical failures in transmission or enhancement by the addition of marginal notes.

Our remarks suggest a more general methodological principle.

47 Pearson’s proposal also does not explain (or mention) the presence of a connective at this point.

48 A similar problem arises for Pearson, who suggests that we might understand the relevant phrase as ‘that which is most properly called truth or falsity’. Nor is it clear what, on this proposal, is less properly called truth or falsity.
It should be the first aim of interpreters of the *Metaphysics* to give a philosophically coherent reading of the α text (subject to the two conditions just mentioned) consistent with Aristotle’s views elsewhere. If this principle is accepted, our philosophically consistent and plausible reading of Aristotle’s discussion of truth-bearers, which is based on the α text, is to be preferred to all other readings currently on offer. The latter would depart (to a greater or lesser degree) from the α text, even were they to succeed in making Aristotle’s views philosophically intriguing (as perhaps with Heidegger’s ‘unhidden-ness’ of truth) or fully consistent with his claims elsewhere.

It is only when this primary aim cannot be realized that we need to adjudicate between the demands of philological conservatism and philosophical desiderata such as overall consistency, charity, etc. Since the latter judgements are complex and contestable, the philosophical scholar should avoid them whenever possible.

5. Conclusion: truth-bearers and truth-makers

Aristotle, when he wrote ‘the strictest case in which being is said is present if anything true or false is (said)’ (1051b1–2), had a clear view of what the (primary) truth-bearers are (propositional items, not external, mind-independent things). At the beginning of this chapter, he finds unproblematic the account of the true and the false for the case of composites: it is encapsulated in the bi-conditionals formulated in Section 3, [TC’] and [FC’]. His main concern in Θ 10 seems to be with truth-makers. This is suggested by his question raised at 1051b5–6: when do the true and the false obtain or not obtain? What are the external, non-mental, or mind-independent conditions, or the way things stand, when propositional items are true or false? He makes it clear that his worry is about truth-makers immediately at 1051b6–9. Indeed, at b9–13 he distinguishes the different classes of things, and their ways of being combined or divided such that they make linguistic items or mental states true or false. Thus, he proceeds at b13–17 to specify how and when linguistic items or mental states are true or false given that things, and their combinations or divisions, are as they are.49 In this way he closes the

Our interpretation yields a convincing reading of Aristotle’s overall line of reasoning while crediting him with a plausible version of a realist theory of truth. First, he holds that truth-bearers are propositional items, linguistic items or mental states, what we called (in Section 2) level 3 items. In this way his view retains a central intuition about the general character of the items normally taken as true or false. However, Aristotle’s discussion, in these passages, leaves open the precise nature of his preferred truth-bearers: whether they are sentences, statements, or abstract items (in the manner of propositions as understood by modern theorists). That said, it is clear that they are not external entities such as objects, compounds, states of affairs, facts, or what have you. In Aristotle’s view, the latter entities could not serve the function of truth-bearing but only that of truth-making. At the heart of his account, there is, it seems, a fundamental contrast between whatever is said of or about things (λόγος) and things (πράγματα), being (ἐὶναι or εἶναι), the latter being external things themselves. This contrast is clear in the distinctions Aristotle draws between things and thinking in Metaphysics E 4 (πράγμασιν at 1027b26, 31; διανοίᾳ at b27–8, 30, 33; 1028a1); between what is/is not and an account in Δ 29 (οὐκ ὄντα at b21; τῷ μὴ εἶναι at b25; λόγος δὲ ψευδής at b26–7); and between things/being and saying the true/false, thinking, or stating in Θ 10 (πράγματα at 1051b2, 5; εἶναι/μὴ εἶναι at b17–23; ἀληθεύει at b3; ἐφευσται at b4; οἴεσθαι and φάντες at b7–8).

Aristotle sets out a realist account of the notions of the true and the false which characterize propositional items. However, his talk of the combinations or divisions of things, or of combined/divided things, leaves open the precise nature of the truth-making entities. Perhaps he was not interested in this latter question. Or perhaps he thought that his theory of substance and essence provided a satisfactory account of the ultimate or fundamental truth-makers. Or perhaps he introduced states of affairs as truth-makers in contexts involving tense or modality. Alternatively, he may have remained agnostic or non-committal with respect to the nature of truth-makers. These are questions for further study. In the passages we have discussed Aristotle is concerned to develop two basic
ideas: first, a propositional item is true (or false) just in case it ‘says’ or ‘posits’ that things are combined or divided as (or contrary to how) things stand—combined or divided—in the external world; second, as suggested in Section 2, the truth or the falsity of propositional items is independent of our thought. While thought processes of combination or division are required to produce propositional items (which are either true or false, in accordance with CP), they do not determine whether a given propositional item is true or false. The latter are true or false (as the case may be) in virtue of things’ being in a certain way. Aristotle’s concern throughout these central passages is to set out and elucidate these basic realist intuitions.

Yale University and Worcester College, Oxford

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Christ, W., Aristotelis Metaphysica (Leipzig, 1906).


does not follow that he was a ‘correspondence theorist’, committed to states of affairs or facts as truth-makers.
The Stoic Argument
From oikeiōsis

Jacob Klein

1. Introduction

Securely Stoic accounts of oikeiōsis—appropriation, as I will translate it—are marked by two features: they begin with the apparently descriptive claim that the complex, seemingly purposeful behaviour all animals display in relation to their environment depends on a sophisticated capacity for self-perception. They conclude, on the other hand, with the normative thesis that the human good consists in a life regulated by reason or, as the Stoics sometimes describe it, in a life lived according to nature.1 This account is central to three of the fullest surviving presentations of Stoic ethics, and sources report that the Stoics appealed to it to defend their conception of the human good in general and their account of justice in particular.2 Since Pohlenz, most commentators have regarded the oikeiōsis doctrine as substantially Stoic in origin and important, one way or another, to Stoic ethical theory.3 But they

© Jacob Klein 2016

I am especially grateful to Tad Brennan and Charles Brittain for extensive discussion, detailed criticism, and encouragement at crucial points. For insightful written comments I thank Victor Caston, Gail Fine, Brad Inwood, Terry Irwin, Nate Jezzi, Anthony Long, Martha Nußbaum, and an anonymous referee for this journal. I have benefited from (and greatly enjoyed) discussions with Margaret Graver, Larkin Philpot, Gretchen Reydams-Schils, Timothy Roche, and Maura Tumulty. Errors and shortcomings are my own.

1 On the translation of oikeiōsis and its cognates see nn. 14 and 16 below.
2 Diogenes Laertius (7. 85–6 = LS 57A = SVF iii. 178) and Cicero (Fin. 3. 16–22) assign the doctrine a grounding role in their surveys of Stoic ethics, and Cic. Acad. 2. 131 (= SVF i. 131) says that the Stoic account of the end is derived from oikeiōsis (‘ducatur a conciliatione’). Hierocles makes oikeiōsis the starting-point of his ethical treatise (El. Eth., col. 1. 1–2). On the doctrine’s connection to justice see Porph. Abst. 3. 19 (= SVF i. 197); Plut. Stoic. repugn. 1938 b (= LS 57E = SVF ii. 724); Soll. an. 962 a; De amore 495 c; Anon. In Plat. Theaet., cols. v. 24–vii. 1 (= LS 57H).
3 Von Arnim bases his attribution of the doctrine to Theophrastus on the syncretizing account of oikeiōsis preserved in Arius Didymus’ survey of Peripatetic ethics (Arius Didymus’ Abriß der peripatetischen Ethik (Vienna, 1926)). He is followed by F. Dirlmeier, Die Oikeioslehre Theophrastos (= Philologus, suppl. 30.1; Leipzig,
have also found it difficult to understand the relationship between its central elements. On the face of it, an appeal to animal behaviour does not offer a compelling strategy for establishing fundamental ethical conclusions. How did the Stoics set about drawing normative principles from claims about animal psychology, and how is the doctrine relevant to the Stoics’ distinctive ethical concerns?²


Besides the general problem of the scarcity of surviving sources, attempts to answer these questions face two more specific difficulties. In the first place, the empirical claims from which the oikeιοσίς theory begins can seem strangely out of joint with the particular normative conclusions the Stoics wish to draw. As is well known, the Stoic account of the human end combines the broadly Socratic claim that virtue is the only good, necessary and sufficient for eudaimonia, with a highly cosmopolitan view of the other-regarding requirements of virtue. The normative elements of Stoic ethical theory appear to include quite demanding obligations towards others, and it is clear that in their discussions of justice the Stoics defended at least a minimal notion of obligation to all human beings as such. The sources dealing with oikeιοσίς, on the other hand, consistently foreground a particularly egoistic

---


---

5 Broadly Socratic, that is, in view of texts such as *Crito* 48B 4–10, where to live well (τὸ εὖ ζῆν) is to live finely and justly (καλῶς καὶ δικαιῶς).
form of behaviour: the readily observable tendency of animals to care for themselves by pursuing what is conducive to their own survival and avoiding what is not. Though commentators have offered various suggestions about the relation between the motive of self-preservation and the other-regarding dimensions of Stoic ethics, there is no consensus about how (or indeed whether) the Stoics integrated them within a single account. The self-regarding focus of the *oikeiōsis* doctrine seems to cut against the cosmopolitan tenor of Stoic ethics.

A second difficulty is posed by the survival of a closely parallel theory—or cluster of theories—associated with the late Academic tradition and deriving, as most commentators now agree, from Antiochus of Ascalon.\(^6\) Antiochus’ adoption and prominent use of the *oikeiōsis* theory tend to confirm its centrality to Stoic ethics, but they also obscure our view of the doctrine’s role in early Stoic theory. In later Academic versions of the doctrine, a structurally similar account of moral development that also begins from the motivational patterns apparent in animal behaviour is made to support a conception of the human *telos* that differs in crucial respects from the Stoics’ own. In the Antiochean accounts of *De finibus* 4 and 5, for instance, the motivational impulses of children and animals are said to confirm a conception of the end according to which states and conditions external to virtue are goods in their own right and contribute, together with virtue itself, to the happiness of human agents (Cic. *Fin.* 4. 16–19, 25–39; 5. 24–36).\(^7\) This analysis of the human good differs importantly from the Stoic identification of goodness with virtue alone; yet it is supposed to follow from some of the same

---


motivational tendencies the Stoics affirm and from the primacy of self-preservation in particular.\textsuperscript{8} By contrast, Antiochus represents the Stoics’ own conclusions as incompatible with the empirical observations from which the Stoics begin (Cic. *Fin.* 4. 33–9).

Despite these challenges, I want to suggest that there is room for further attention to the doctrine’s purported ethical import. Appeals to the character of neonatal motivation figure in the ethical arguments of each of the main Hellenistic schools, and in each case they seem intended to clarify the structure of fully rational motivation in human agents. The Stoic doctrine of *oikeiōsis* follows this pattern in two important respects. First, it treats the capacity for perception, and the capacity for self-perception in particular, as the psychological basis of the activities appropriate to animate organisms in virtue of the constitutions given to them by nature.\textsuperscript{9} Second, it treats the perfection of these capacities and the functions they control as a sufficient condition of an organism’s teleological success. These claims are continuous with the Stoic analysis of human agency, and they answer to the central claims of Stoic ethics: viz., that virtue consists in a cognitive condition that centrally includes self-knowledge and that, together with the activities to which it gives rise, this condition is constitutive of the human good.\textsuperscript{10} Stoic sources insist, as Academic and Peripatetic accounts do not, that animals are born with a capacity to perceive themselves and their situation in the world, and that this capacity enables them to coordinate their actions in a way that is appropriate both to their surroundings and to their distinctive constitutions.

\textsuperscript{8} Strictly speaking, the Stoics identify goodness with virtue and what participates in virtue, including especially the activities to which virtue gives rise (D.L. 7. 94 = *SVF* iii. 76; Stob. 2. 57 = *SVF* iii. 70).

\textsuperscript{9} I use ‘animate organisms’ to distinguish organisms that possess *psuchē* from those that do not in the Stoic scheme. Such a phrase would be redundant in a discussion of Aristotle’s biology, which treats every living organism as ensouled.

\textsuperscript{10} Here and throughout, I employ ‘cognitive’ to characterize a mental state whose functional role is to represent the world. In this usage ‘cognitive’ applies quite generally to representational states such as perceptions, beliefs, and judgements no less than to knowledge. This clarification is important since ‘cognitive’ and ‘cognitive impression’ are sometimes used to translate the Stoic technical terms *καταληπτικός* and *φαντασία καταληπτική*. So employed, ‘cognitive’ carries a further sense I do not intend, that of warrant. A warranted belief results, in the Stoics’ view, from assent to impressions that (1) are true, (2) precisely represent their object, and (3) have (on the interpretation I accept) a phenomenal character distinct from mental representations that fail conditions (1) or (2). In my usage, a cognitive mental state possesses a representational ‘direction of fit’ but need not satisfy any of these further conditions.
I will argue that these elements of the oikeiōsis doctrine help to clarify its role in Stoic ethics. Though the characterization of animal behaviour central to each of the oikeiōsis accounts does not appear to constitute an argument for the Stoic analysis of the human telos in its own right, it does constitute such an argument when conjoined to a normative assumption the Stoics share with other Hellenistic schools: roughly, that the earliest object of motivation in animals and human infants corresponds to the object of motivation in fully rational human agents, thus providing a guide to the basic character of the human end. My aim here is not to defend this assumption but rather to reconstruct its role in Stoic theory as part of an argument for the Stoic account of the human good. If this assumption is a common starting-point of Hellenistic cradle arguments, as Jacques Brunswig has argued, then the analysis of animal psychology that survives in fragmentary discussions of Stoic oikeiōsis can be seen to motivate the central tenets of Stoic ethical theory in clear respects. The Stoics explain the complex, goal-directed behaviours of animals by appealing to the perceptive and proprioceptive capacities with which they are born. This focus on animal perception supports the cognitive analysis of virtue the Stoics accept in the human case: what animals do on the basis of non-rational perception, the Stoics claim, human beings do on the basis of rational, conceptually structured perception and cognition. The Stoic understanding of human virtue as a cognitive condition that centrally includes self-knowledge is thus one instance of a wider analysis that makes accurate cognition the basis of appropriate action and teleological success in rational and non-rational animals alike.

If this reconstruction is correct, the Stoics argue for the primacy of cognition in their explanation of animal behaviour because they

---

11 Since talk of motivation and pursuit introduces an opaque context, it is hard to formulate this assumption in a way that is both precise and which covers its use by Stoics, Epicureans, and Academics. One might say that each school appears to assume that the kind (or kinds) of thing pursued—in the referentially transparent sense—by infants and non-rational animals is also and exclusively the kind (or kinds) of thing pursued—in the referentially transparent sense—by fully rational human agents. For the Epicureans this object is pleasure. For the Stoics, as I argue below, it is the integrity of the organism’s ἡγεμονικόν and the appropriate functions (καθήκοντα) this secures. There may of course be differences in the specific activities prescribed to rational and non-rational animals under this assumption, as well as differences in the structure and sophistication of their motivations. The supposition is not that these motivations and activities will be alike in the rational and non-rational cases but that they will have, as their final object, the same kind of thing. Cf. n. 35 below.
wish to argue that appropriate action is also achieved by human agents through a cognitive grasp of one’s own constitution and through the perfection of the faculty on which this grasp depends. The psychological background of the oikeiōsis account is crucial to making sense of the doctrine’s role in Stoic ethical theory, for it suggests an effort by the Stoics to extend key elements of Socratic psychology to a much broader analysis of the mechanisms by which animate organisms are regulated by nature so as to achieve their ends. In what follows, I argue for this interpretation in three stages. I first offer a brief survey of the available evidence for the theory of oikeiōsis. I then emphasize a number of difficulties raised by recent interpretations of this evidence. Finally, I suggest a revised account of the way in which the oikeiōsis theory supports the central claims of Stoic ethics: that virtue consists in a cognitive grasp of the natural order, and that this condition, when perfected, is sufficient for achieving the human telos.

2. Evidence for the Stoic doctrine

The state of the available evidence for the Stoic doctrine is complicated, to say the least. It is unclear whether the Stoics themselves coined the verbal noun oikeiōsis, and there is no direct textual evidence that Chrysippus himself used it, though his use of cognates is well attested (Plut. Stoic. repugn. 1038 b = LS 57E = SVF III. 179, ii. 724; Galen, PHP 5. 5. 8–26 = Posid. fr. 169 = LS 65M). The term first appears in a fragment attributed to Theophrastus and derives from a family of words occasionally put to philosophical use by Plato and Aristotle. As Pembroke observes, the verb to which oikeiōsis is directly related is oikeioun, and this is derived in turn from the adjective oikeion and the noun oikos. A thing or person is said to be oikeion when it belongs to one either by kinship, as in the case of family, or by possession, as in the case of property. Some texts employ the middle-passive form oikeiousthai to suggest that something has been made an object of care and concern for a creature by the agency of providential nature. Oikeiōsis, on the
other hand, describes an orientation that is at once both cognitive and motivational.\textsuperscript{14} Plutarch (\textit{Stoic. repugn.} 1038 c=\textit{SVF} i. 197) offers as an explanation of the Stoic concept the claim that \textit{oikeiōsis} is a perception (\textit{aisthēsis}) and grasp (\textit{antilēpsis}) of what is appropriate (\textit{okeion}).\textsuperscript{15} No English rendering of \textit{okeion} is wholly satisfactory, but the Stoics’ technical usage is well captured by Brennan: a feature of an animal’s environment may be characterized as \textit{okeion} just in case it is a suitable object of concern for the animal.\textsuperscript{16}

The terminology of \textit{oikeiōsis} figures in a range of texts in con-

\textsuperscript{14} In Striker’s paraphrase, \textit{oikeiōsis} is the ‘recognition and appreciation of something as belonging to one’ (‘Role’, 281). No single English word quite covers the complex sense the Stoics gave to the term. ‘Appropriation’ and ‘orientation’ come close but fail to capture the recognition of personal affinity conveyed by the Greek. ‘Appropriation’ has been the predominant translation since Long and Sedley, however, who observe that it ‘provides a means, through the verb or adjective “appropriate”, of rendering grammatically related forms of the Greek root \textit{oik}-’ (A. A. Long and D. Sedley (eds.), \textit{The Hellenistic Philosophers [LS]}, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1987), i. 351). ‘Appropriation’ also preserves the connection between \textit{oikeiōsis} and appropriate (\textit{kathēkos}) action, which the Stoics intend (D.L. 7. 108=\textit{LS} 59C=\textit{SVF} iii. 493), and I have occasionally rendered \textit{kathēkos} by ‘appropriate’ as well. Besides that of Long and Sedley, discussions of the term and its cognates include Pembroke, ‘\textit{Oikeiōsis}’, 114–16 and 132–41; Kerferd, ‘Search’, 177–96; Inwood, \textit{Ethics and Human Action}, 184–5; Ramelli, \textit{Hierocles}, 54. For the use of related terminology in Plato and Aristotle see esp. Pohlenz, \textit{Grundfragen}, 12 n. 1; Pembroke ‘\textit{Oikeiōsis}’, 132–8; Kerferd, ‘Search’, 183–4; Brennan, \textit{The Stoic Life}, 153–63. In Greek \textit{dallōtrion} is the contrast term for \textit{okeion}, and \textit{allōtriosis} (alienation, estrangement) is the corresponding verbal noun. Cicero typically renders \textit{oikeiōsis} with either \textit{commendatio} or \textit{conciliatio}, with \textit{conciliatum} and \textit{alienum} answering to the Greek \textit{okeion} and \textit{allōtro}.

\textsuperscript{15} Inwood doubts Plutarch’s trustworthiness in this passage on the grounds that \textit{oikeiōsis} ‘depends on perception but is not itself a form of perception’ (\textit{Ethics and Human Action}, 312 n. 36; cf. Striker, ‘Role’, 281 n. 1). This is no doubt correct, but it is not clear to me that Plutarch’s usage in this regard is any looser than the Stoics’ own. Given the details of Stoic psychology, which is built around a cognitive analysis of motivation, there is a tight connection between the recognition of something as \textit{okeion} and the consequent motivation to pursue it (cf. n. 76 below). Porphyry similarly maintains that perception (\textit{tò αἰσθάνεσθαι}) is the principle (\textit{άρχη}) of \textit{oikeiōsis} and \textit{allōtriosis} (\textit{Abst.} 3. 19=\textit{SVF} i. 197).

\textsuperscript{16} See Brennan, \textit{The Stoic Life}, 158: ‘I propose that what it means to take something to be \textit{okeion} is that one treats it as an object of concern.’ As Brennan observes (in personal correspondence), ‘concern’ must here be understood broadly enough to cover a spectrum of cases ranging from the nurturing and benevolent to the appetitive and predatory. Though it sounds objectionable to describe a newly hatched chick as \textit{okeion} to a bird of prey as well as to the mother hen, the different ways in which the chick is of interest to each are presumably to be explained by the differing constitutions of hens and hawks. Cf. D.L. 7. 108 (=\textit{LS} 59C=\textit{SVF} iii. 493).
connection with a distinctively Stoic account of human development. These reports differ importantly in emphasis, and it is possible to produce different pictures of the *oikeiōsis* doctrine depending on which of them are given the most weight. Two of the fullest presentations, which have also received the most scholarly attention, are those of Diogenes Laertius and Cicero. Though the shorter of the two, Diogenes’ account is distinctive for its presentation of material that appears to be taken from Chrysippus’ lost treatise *On Ends*, and it probably gives us our most reliable glimpse of the main lines of the early Stoic doctrine.¹⁷ Cicero’s version (*Fin.* 3. 16–23), though more detailed in some respects, is also more difficult to attribute. Cicero does not mention any of the older Stoics by name, and his summaries of the theory may follow later versions that appear to be based (in *De officiis*) on Panaitius and are perhaps based (in *De finibus*) on Diogenes of Babylon. Finally, there is the detailed, apparently orthodox but regrettably fragmentary treatise of the Stoic Hierocles, which defends specific aspects of the Stoic doctrine against later critics. These texts can be supplemented by a helpful but incomplete account of *oikeiōsis* in one of Seneca’s letters, by shorter passages in Cicero and Aulus Gellius, and by many oblique references in Epicurus and Marcus Aurelius.¹⁸

Each of these sources merits individual discussion, but there is enough common ground among them to supply us with a reasonably uncontroversial overview of the Stoic theory. Diogenes, Cicero, and Hierocles each begin by alluding to a form of self-perception that precedes and explains an animal’s earliest impulses, enabling it to orient and co-ordinate its activities so as to ensure its own survival. No one, the Stoics observe, teaches a newborn animal what its limbs and appendages are for, nor the sort of food it needs, nor the predators it must avoid in order to survive. One, the Stoics observe, teaches a newborn animal what its limbs and appendages are for, nor the sort of food it needs, nor the predators it must avoid in order to survive.


¹⁸ The main texts are *D.L.* 7. 85–6 (= *LS* 57A = *SVF* iii. 178); Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics*; *Cic. Fin.* 3. 16–23 (= *LS* 59D); *Off.* 1. 11–14, 53–8; 3. 27; *Sen. Ep.* 121. Seneca’s report mentions Posidonius and Archidemus by name. This is presumably Archidemus of Tarsus, as Inwood notes (*Seneca: Selected Philosophical Letters [Seneca]* (Oxford, 2007), 333). Other useful references include Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1038 A–E; Alex. Aphr. *Mant.* 150. 20 ff. Bruns; *Epict. Diss.* 1. 6. 16–21; 1. 19. 15; 2. 22. 15; 3. 24. 11; *Ench.* 31. 3. Academic and Peripatetic versions of the doctrine—all of which are likely to derive from Antiochus and are probably influenced by Carneades—include *Cic. Fin.* 4.16 ff.: 5. 16–21, 24–7; *Acad.* 1. 22–3; *Gell.* 12. 5. 7 (= *SVF* iii. 181); *Stob.* 2. 47–8 and esp. 2. 118–23.
From birth animals display a striking sensitivity, present without instruction, to the nature of their own faculties and to the threats and benefits present in their environment. Hierocles argues at length that animals continuously perceive not only what their own physical faculties with their various limbs and appendages are for, but also what the dispositions of other animals are for and the actions, such as flight or aggression, that constitute an appropriate response to them (El. Eth., cols. I. 50–III. 29). The same form of self-perception is invoked to explain a range of co-ordinated behaviour animals display in relation to other animals, including concern for offspring and, in some cases, co-operation with other species. Thus a central claim of the oiketōsis theory is that animals are born with a capacity to perceive, in a teleologically informed way, their appropriate relation to a range of complex features of their environment.

The focus on animal behaviour, however, is apparently not the central import of the Stoic theory. In each of the main accounts, this initial focus shifts to an analysis of psychological development in humans and, finally, to conclusions about the character of the human good. Unfortunately, Hierocles’ otherwise continuous and detailed account contains a lengthy lacuna at just the point at which the case of human development and its implications are about to be described. The summaries of Cicero and Diogenes briefly outline, however, what fuller articulations of the doctrine must have described in greater detail: the way in which the initial perceptions and attractions of pre-rational children develop in the ideal case into the systematic, propositionally structured form of cognition in which virtue consists. This condition is rooted in a developing set of conceptions (ennoiai) that appear to involve, as part of their content, an increasingly articulate awareness of the kind of creature one is and of the modes of behaviour that are appropriate as a result.

The link between self-perception and appropriate behaviour towards other species is explicit in Hierocles (see esp. El. Eth., col. III. 20–9). A link between self-perception and concern for offspring is suggested, though not explicit, in Plutarch’s remarks at Stoic. repugn. 1038b–c. I develop this connection below.

It is clear that the Stoics regard such conceptions as partly and perhaps primarily constitutive of the rational faculty that guides and explains human behaviour quite generally. Thus Diogenes describes the human transition to rational maturity as the point at which ‘reason supervenes as the craftsman of impulse’ (D.L. 7. 86 = LS 57A = SVF iii. 178, trans. Long and Sedley), and Cicero’s account describes the eventual appreciation by human agents of the ‘order and harmony of our obligations’ (Fin. 3. 21 = LS 59D = SVF iii. 188, trans. after Rackham). These descriptions suggest that a central goal of the oikeiōsis theory is to establish reason’s role in shaping the motivations of adult human beings and to characterize this role as the distinguishing mark of human agency.

3. Interpretative difficulties

This overview more or less summarizes the picture that emerges if the reports of Cicero, Diogenes, and Hierocles are taken together. Though most commentators agree that the oikeiōsis theory is somehow central to Stoic ethics, there is little agreement about the way in which an argumentative appeal to it is supposed to proceed. We can distinguish two broad ways of understanding the ethical implications of the Stoic account that have so far dominated the interpretative literature. These interpretations are best illustrated by reference to a prominent feature of Diogenes’ report, the impulse to self-preservation that characterizes animal behaviour from birth:

τὴν δὲ πρώτην ὁρμήν φασὶ τὸ ζῷον ἵσχειν ἐπὶ τὸ τηρεῖν ἑαυτό, οἰκειούσης αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ τῇς φύσεως ἀπ’ ἄρχης, καθά φησιν ὁ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ τελών, πρῶτον οἰκεῖον λέγων εἶναι παντὶ ζῷῳ τὴν αὐτοῦ σύστασιν καὶ τὴν ταύτης συναίσθησιν· οὔτε γὰρ ἀλλοτριώσαι εἰκός ἦν αὐτῷ τὸ ζῷον, οὔτε ποιήσασαν αὐτό, μητ’ ἀλλοτριώσαι μητ’ [οὐκ] οἰκεϊόσαι. ἀπολείπεται τοίνυν λέγειν συστησαμένην αὐτὸ οἰκεϊόσαι πρὸς ἑαυτῷ· οὔτω γὰρ τὰ τε βλάπτοντα διωθεῖται καὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα προσίεται. δὸ δὲ λέγοντι τνες, πρὸς ἱδονὴν γίγνεσθαι τὴν πρώτην ὁρμήν τοῖς ζώοις, φειδός ἀποφαίνουσαι. ἐπιγέννημα γὰρ φασιν, εἰ ἀρα ἐστιν, ἱδονὴν εἶναι ὅταν αὐτῇ καθ’ αὐτὴν ἡ φύσις ἐπιζητήσασα τῇ ἐναρμόζοντα τῇ συστάσει ἀπολάβῃ· ῥότον τρόπον ἀφιλαρύνεται τὰ ζῷα καὶ θάλλει τὰ φυτά. οὐδὲν τε, φασί, δεύλλαζεν ἡ φύσις ἐπὶ τῶν φυτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ζῴων, ὅτε χωρὶς ὁρμῆς καὶ αἰσθάνεσας κα¬κεία οἰκονομεῖ καὶ ἐφ’ ἡμῶν τινα φυτοειδῶς γίνεται, ἐκ περιττοῦ δὲ τῆς ὁρμῆς τοῖς ζῷοις ἐπιγενομένης, ἡ συγχρόμενα πορεύεται πρὸς τὰ οἰκεία, τούτους μὲν

21 See n. 65 below.
They [sc. the Stoics] say that an animal has self-preservation as the object of its primary impulse, since Nature from the beginning appropriates it (to itself), as Chrysippus says in his On Ends book 1. The first thing appropriate to every animal, he says, is its own constitution and the awareness of this. For Nature was not likely either to alienate the animal (from itself) or to make it and then neither alienate it nor appropriate it. So it remains to say that in constituting the animal Nature appropriated it to itself. This is why the animal rejects what is harmful and accepts what is appropriate. They hold it false to say as some people do that pleasure is the object of an animal’s first impulse. For pleasure, they say, if it does occur, is a by-product which arises only when Nature all by itself has searched out and adopted the proper requirements for a creature’s constitution, just as animals [then] frolic and plants bloom. Nature, they say, is no different in regard to plants and animals at the time when it directs animals as well as plants without impulse and sensation, and in us certain processes of a vegetative kind take place. But since animals have the additional faculty of impulse, through the use of which they go in search of what is appropriate to them, what is natural for them is to be administered in accordance with their impulse. And since reason by way of a more perfect management has been bestowed on rational beings, to live correctly in accordance with reason comes to be natural for them. For reason supervenes as the craftsman of impulse. (D.L. 7. 85–6=LS 57A=SVF iii. 178, trans. Long and Sedley, with minor changes)²²

Diogenes here describes a form of motivation present in every animal, a protæ hormê or primary impulse whose object is the preservation of the constitution (sustasis) nature has given the animal and of

²² The text is that of H. S. Long’s 1964 OCT, with the following changes. In line 2 I follow Korais and Dorandi in supplying εαυτῷ. In line 4 I follow Kuehn and Dorandi in reading αὑτῷ for αὐτῷ in the primary manuscripts (B, P, and F). As Inwood notes (Ethics and Human Action, 311 n. 30), the reflexive pronoun is required in both places in order to justify the conclusion in line 5: Nature has appropriated the animal to itself. Similar uses of οἰκεῖον in Stoic contexts imply the same threeterm relation (e.g. Hier. El. Eth., col. vi. 51; vii. 16, 20, 49). In line 4 Pohlenz reads αναλάθησαν for συνείδησαν in the manuscripts, both because of its frequent use by Hierocles in connection with οἰκείωσις and because the attribution to animals of the form of cognition connoted by εἰδέναι is ‘kaum denkbar’ (Grundfragen, 7 n. 1). For considerations against this emendation see J. M. Rist, Stoic Philosophy (Cambridge, 1969), 44 ff. For a further defence of it see Inwood, Ethics and Human Action, 313 n. 42. In line 11 I follow Long and Sedley in printing ἄτε (B, P, and F) for ἄτι in H. S. Long’s OCT. In line 15 I follow Long and Sedley in printing τῷ (B and F) for τῷ (P) in H. S. Long’s OCT.
which it is aware. Commentators differ sharply about the role this impulse plays in the Stoic characterization of practical rationality, which the theory of oikeiōsis seems intended to support. The main challenge is to fit the apparently egoistic character of this impulse with what is known independently about the altruistic requirements of Stoic ethics. If the Stoics intend to argue for an other-regarding conception of the requirements that apply to rational human agents, why do they begin from such a confined and self-centred form of motivation, which they appear to regard as universal in animate organisms?

There are two general approaches to this problem in the literature. According to one line of interpretation, the primary impulse to self-preservation is primary not in the sense of being one of the earliest motivations observable in every animal but in the sense of being the dominant form of motivation in every animal, including fully rational human agents. On this model, the prōtē hormē to self-preservation characterizes the motivation of a sage no less than that of non-rational animals and pre-rational humans. In the ideal case of the child who eventually becomes a sage, the acquisition of a capacity to shape her actions by reason does not supplant or supersede the impulse to self-preservation with which she was born; it rather determines the form this impulse is to take. Rather than preserving herself as an animal with animal needs, she one day begins to preserve herself qua rational, which is to say, she does the things a fully rational human being should do. Though the impulse to preserve herself is now an impulse to preserve her essentially rational nature, it nonetheless remains primary to her motivational outlook. Since, ex hypothesi, the sage is a fully rational agent, on this interpretation the impulse to self-preservation structures the motivations the

---

23 A number of sources speak both of self-preserving motivation and behaviour and of a πρῶτον οἰκεῖον or primary appropriate thing. Diogenes' account, however, is the only source that makes explicit mention of a πρῶτη ὁρμή or primary impulse. See Inwood, Ethics and Human Action, 218–24.


25 See e.g. M. Pohlenz, Die Stoa (Göttingen, 1948), 115: ‘Wenn sich dann aber im Laufe der Jahre der Logos ausbildet und seiner selbst bewußt wird, wendet sich die Oikeiosis dem Logos als dem wahren Wesen des Menschen zu und erkennt in der reinen Entfaltung der Vernunft das, was für den Menschen wahrhaft “naturgemäß” und “gut” ist.’ Pohlenz goes on to identify concern for human reason with concern for that of the cosmos as a whole (117), a move Striker dismisses with the observation that ‘concern for my glass of water is not concern for yours, or for the whole mass of water in the universe’ (‘Following Nature’, 227). The mass of water in the universe is not a continuous or unified entity, however. Stoic πνεῦμα is.
Stoics regard as paradigmatically rational. With some differences of emphasis and detail, Pohlenz, Pembroke, and Inwood defend this model of oikeiōsis. Each has also argued that Stoic ethics is derived not merely from the oikeiōsis account in general but from the impulse to self-preservation in particular.\textsuperscript{26}

A second line of interpretation holds that, at least in the human case, the later stages of psychological development involve a comprehensive break with the self-interested outlook characteristic of animals and pre-rational children. On this model, it is implausible to suppose that Stoic ethics is somehow derived from the motive of self-preservation, since this motive is entirely superseded in the course of rational development. Those favouring this general account, again with differences of detail, include White, Striker, and Frede. White, for instance, comprehensively criticizes Pohlenz’s understanding of the oikeiōsis doctrine, arguing that its focus on self-preservation and self-interest is mistakenly based on a reading of De finibus 4 and 5, thereby confusing older Stoic views with Antiochus’ later appropriation of the doctrine. White explicitly rejects Pohlenz’s supposition that the motivations of the sage are ‘derived from the impulse to self-preservation’, arguing instead that this impulse is eventually replaced by a regard for the rational order apparent in nature as a whole, an order the sage comes to esteem propter se.\textsuperscript{27} Frede and Striker adopt a similar interpretation. Frede holds that ‘in the course of this development one’s motivation undergoes a radical change’, a change that explains why although one is born with a strong impulse to preserve oneself, the Stoic sage is not even so partial as to prefer her own survival to another’s.\textsuperscript{28} Striker similarly suggests that what the Stoics need ‘is an argument to show that man’s interests should at a certain point in life shift

\textsuperscript{26} Thus Pohlenz: ‘Das Grundmotiv der Lehre ist, die Normen für die Lebensgestaltung aus einem Urtriebe der menschlichen Natur abzuleiten’ (Grundfragen, 12). Pembroke speaks of ‘the morality which the Stoics derived from self-preservation’ (‘Oikeiōsis’, 132). Inwood characterizes the motive of self-preservation as ‘the starting-point for all value’ in Stoic theory (Ethics and Human Action, 184) and attributes to Chrysippus the view that ‘Man’s commitment to virtue could be derived . . . from the basic instinct of self-preservation’ (Ethics and Human Action, 194). According to R. Salles, ‘On [the Stoic] view, our moral evolution is determined by the development of our concern for self-preservation’ (The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism (Aldershot, 2005), 48).

\textsuperscript{27} White, ‘Basis’, 149–53.

from self-preservation or even self-perfection to an exclusive interest in observing and following nature’. In her view, the sage’s motivation ‘will not simply be an enlightened form of self-love’.

The upshot, then, is that the literature on *oikeiōsis* reflects a basic disagreement about the correct way to understand the rational development of the Stoic sage and, more generally, the relationship between the observations with which the *oikeiōsis* account begins and the conclusions the Stoics go on to draw. Each of these interpretations, moreover, is at points difficult to square with the available evidence. On the one hand, there is good reason to suppose that the Stoics regard the primary impulse to self-preservation as primary to rational agents no less than to children and non-rational animals. This understanding seems to be required by a number of texts, and it fits closely with the eudaimonist framework of Stoic ethics as a whole. On the other hand, the tendency of commentators to understand this impulse in narrowly egoistic terms has prompted the assumption—traceable especially to the interpretations of Pohlenz, Brink, and Pembroke—that the Stoics must have recognized two distinct forms of *oikeiōsis*, variously characterized by commentators as outward- and inward-looking or as personal and social forms of *oikeiōsis*. This distinction has prompted, in turn, a number of deflationary conclusions about the point and

---


30 Striker, ‘Following Nature’, 231. She suggests that according to Cicero’s account, ‘self-preservation is replaced as a primary goal by the desire for order and harmony’ (ibid. 227).

31 The emphasis on self-preservation in the rational case is perhaps strongest in Seneca’s Letter 121, where Seneca relates the actions appropriate at each stage of life to a fundamental orientation towards self that is constant through each of them and to which a creature’s behaviour is referred. It seems clear from Seneca’s account that this form of motivation is prior in some respect to every other form of motivational impulse: ‘If I do all things because of concern for myself [propter curam mei], concern for myself is prior to all things’ (Ep. 121. 17, my translation). For discussion of this passage see Inwood, *Seneca*, 342. Similarly strong statements of self-interest appear in Epictetus, who clearly intends them to apply in the case of the sage (e.g. Diss. 1. 19. 11–15; 2. 4. 1–4; 2. 10. 10–18; 2. 22. 15–21; 2. 23. 17–19); cf. Cic. Fin. 3. 59 (=LS 59F = SVF iii. 498); Marc. Aur. Med. 11. 16; Alex. Aphr. Quaest. 119. 23 Bruns (=SVF iii. 165). Cf. Kühn, ‘L’attachement’, 215–24.

coherence of the Stoic doctrine. Thus Inwood, building on the reconstruction proposed by Brink, concludes that the Stoics introduced social oikeiōsis as a ‘later graft’ onto the original theory, which initially dealt only with appropriation to oneself.\textsuperscript{33} The suggestion that the older Stoics failed to connect these distinct forms of oikeiōsis in a coherent way is now embedded in one strand of the interpretative literature. Yet it attributes to the Stoics a disjointed and apparently \textit{ad hoc} account.

The model favoured by Striker and Frede invites other difficulties. If the motivations of a fully rational agent are characterized by a fundamental shift away from self-concern, as their interpretations suggest, it is difficult to understand why references to the self-preserving behaviour of animals figure so prominently in the oikeiōsis account at all. As Jacques Brunschwig emphasizes, Stoic and Epicurean appeals to neonatal motivation are evidently intended to inform us, in the last analysis, of the structure and content of the human \textit{telos}.\textsuperscript{34} In each case, these arguments offer us a story about what \textit{does} occur in infants and non-rational animals and about what, given these starting-points, \textit{ought} to occur in rational agents. Neonatal motivation and fully rational motivation constitute the two poles of the Epicurean argument, and the Epicureans’ appeal to the former is clearly intended to support their account of the latter (D.L. 10. 137; Cic. \textit{Fin.} 1. 29–31=LS 21A; \textit{Fin.} 2. 31–2). That the Stoic account works on analogous lines is strongly suggested by a number of sources. It is assumed by Cicero, for instance, and it is stated quite clearly by Alexander of Aphrodisias, who notes that disagreement about the primary object of oikeiōsis corresponds to disagreement about the highest good, so that these objects are correlative in an important respect.\textsuperscript{35} If the impulse to

\textsuperscript{33} Inwood, ‘Comments’, 192. Inwood suggests that ‘Chrysippus’ failure to forge a firm and plausible link [between personal and social oikeiōsis] can be seen as the cause for the confusion seen in later discussions’ (ibid. 197). Again, ‘if the Stoics themselves had only an \textit{ad hoc} explanation for the relation of the two oikeiōseis, it is less puzzling that this late Hellenistic text [i.e. that of Arius Didymus] failed to produce a philosophically coherent doctrine from them’ (ibid. 199). Cf. Brink, ‘Theophrastus and Zeno’, 137: ‘Later Stoics could use the whole range of Theophrastus’s oikeiōtēs grafted on to their own doctrines.’ For persuasive criticisms of this suggestion see Long, ‘Theophrastus’, 373–4.

\textsuperscript{34} Brunschwig, ‘Cradle’, 113–15 and 119–22.

\textsuperscript{35} At Mant. 150. 27–8 Bruns Alexander attributes to each of the main schools what Inwood usefully calls the ‘alignment condition’, viz. that ‘the distinguishing feature of the primary object of desire (\textit{τὸ πρῶτον οἰκεῖον}) corresponds to the distinguishing feature of the ultimate object of desire’ (trans. Inwood, in \textit{Ethics after Aristotle},
self-preservation is wholly abandoned by rational agents, why do Stoic accounts of oikeiōsis insist on the primacy of this impulse in the first place? To hold that human motivation undergoes a radical shift in the ideal course of development seems to undercut the dialectical point of the oikeiōsis account.

A central difficulty in understanding the ethical import of oikeiōsis, therefore, is that of fitting the Stoics' claims about animal psychology and teleology together with their claims about rational human agency. If we emphasize the motive of self-preservation with which the oikeiōsis accounts begin, we seem unable to explain the single-minded attachment to virtue that characterizes the fully rational sage. On the other hand, if we point to discontinuities between the animal and human cases, we seem to undermine the dialectical point of the argument as a whole. The Stoics appear to lack a convincing account of the psychology that bridges the gap between non-rational and rational forms of motivation, or an explanation of how neonatal concern for one's self supports the other-regarding injunctions the Stoics accept in the human case. On the whole, commentators have not been optimistic about the Stoics' success in bridging these gaps or in showing how appeals to oikeiōsis could be used to support the central tenets of Stoic ethics.36 More recently some have concluded, in view of these difficulties, that the oikeiōsis theory must not have been offered as a justification for ethical conclusions at all. Instead of offering grounds for accepting the Stoic analysis of virtue, it merely details the psychological route by which this condition is acquired.37

118). This assumption structures the Carneadia divisio, and Alexander here applies it for his own critical ends, much as Cicero does in De finibus 5. Influenced as they are by Carneades, Alexander’s testimony and representation of the Stoic position must be treated with care. In my view, however, what is distorted in Carneadean accounts of oikeiōnas is not the ‘alignment condition’ but the psychological details that underpin Stoic versions of the argument. In particular, Carneadean accounts obscure the distinctive analysis of the πρῶτον οἰκεῖον, with its emphasis on cognition and self-perception, from which Stoic versions of the argument begin. As I argue below, this distortion lies behind the allegation—implied in De finibus 3, explicit in De finibus 4—that the Stoic account of the human telos is inconsistent with the motivational starting-points the Stoics themselves accept. See further n. 92 below.


37 Striker, ‘Role’, 293; S. Menn, ‘Physics as a Virtue’, Proceedings of the Boston
The interpretative claim I want to develop is that the Stoic argument fits the dialectical pattern prominent in other Hellenistic appeals to neonatal motivation. The Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* is more than a description of the process by which rational agents acquire the beliefs in which virtue consists; it is also offered as a justification of Stoic claims about the cognitive character of virtue and about the sufficiency of virtue for happiness. My reconstruction takes as a starting-point two pieces of evidence for the Stoic view. (1) Seneca (*Ep.* 121. 10=LS 29F=SVF iii. 184) and Alexander of Aphrodisias (*Mant.* 150. 30–3 Bruns=SVF iii. 183) confirm that, according to at least some of the Stoics, the object of a creature’s primary *oikeiōsis* relation is not self-preservation narrowly construed, but the preservation (*tērēsis*) of its constitution (*sustasis/constitutio*). (2) Galen preserves a fragment of Posidonius in which Chrysippus is said to have restricted the *oikeion* to the fine (*kalon*) alone (*PHP* 5. 5. 8–26=Posidonius fr. 169=LS 65M). An animal’s impulse to self-preservation, I will argue, should not be identified with an impulse to pursue its physical well-being *per se*, nor with a form of motivation that is radically altered or replaced in the fully rational case. Rather, it should be identified with an impulse to preserve (*tērein*) its leading faculty or *hēgemonikon* in a condition of conformity to nature. Being directed at the *hēgemonikon* itself, the primary impulse is prior not in order of time or strength, but in so far as it has as its object the preservation of the faculty in which each of an


38 This latter claim should be distinguished clearly from a third possibility the Stoics do not intend: that the *oikeiōsis* account supplies epistemic grounds for the beliefs in which virtue consists. It is clear that no one could acquire the demanding cognitive condition the Stoics identify with virtue merely by accepting basic theoretical claims about virtue. As I argue below, the *oikeiōsis* account offers one kind of support for Stoic claims about the character of virtue and the objects towards which virtuous motivation is directed. One does not acquire the set of beliefs in which virtue consists merely by accepting these claims, however.

39 Alexander reports that those Stoics who ‘are thought to speak more subtly and to make more distinctions about this say that it is to our own constitution [*σύστασιν*] and its preservation [*τήρησιν*] that we have been appropriated’ (*Mant.* 150. 30–3 Bruns, trans. Sharples). Pohlenz takes this to refer to Chrysippus (*Grundfragen*, 8–9). Here appropriation to one’s *σύστασιν* is contrasted with appropriation to oneself *simplicer*. Seneca’s *Letter* 121 is devoted to considering whether ‘animals have an awareness of their own constitution’ (*Ep.* 121. 5, trans. Inwood). Cic. *Fin.* 3. 16 (=SVF iii. 182) preserves a similar distinction, noting that an animal is appropriated to its constitution (*suum statum*) in particular. See esp. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action* 190, 313 nn. 38 and 40, and *Seneca*, 335–7.
animal’s impressions and impulses originates.\textsuperscript{40} As Nathan Powers has recently emphasized, the Stoics ‘ascribe to the \textit{hégemonikon} control over \textit{all} an animal’s life functions’.\textsuperscript{41} An animal’s impulse to preserve this faculty must then be a higher-order impulse to preserve the integrity of the faculty that comprehensively determines its first-order motivations. It is primary, that is to say, in that it underlies each of an animal’s activities and explains its inclination to perform them. It is best thought of, I believe, as an orientation towards appropriate function, an animal’s disposition to carry out the kinds of activities implicit in its physical constitution. This disposition is made possible, in turn, by the mechanism of self-perception, which enables an organism to grasp the ends for which it has been framed by nature.

This understanding of the \textit{prōtē hormē} helps to resolve the tensions I have noted. On this account, the Stoics do not view the primary impulse as a distinct form of \textit{oikeiōsis} underwriting a distinction between \textit{oikeiōsis} towards self and \textit{oikeiōsis} towards others. Instead, they view an animal’s constitution—the \textit{prōton oikeion} that is the object of its primary \textit{oikeiōsis} relation—as a template for each of its first-order impulses: a specification of the patterns of behaviour appropriate to a creature of its kind. Thus the vulnerability of a hen’s constitution determines, under relevant conditions, that flight is an appropriate response to predators, while the constitution of the pea crab determines the appropriateness of its co-operation with the \textit{pinna} mollusc.\textsuperscript{42} So understood, the primary impulse will be satisfied not simply by those activities that promote an organism’s physical survival, but by the full range of behaviours the Stoics regard as appropriate (\textit{kathēkon}) to the organism. In a fully rational agent, this impulse is indeed a form of appropriation to

\textsuperscript{40} D.L. 7. 159 (=\textit{SVF} ii. 837): ‘By the ruling part of the soul [\textit{ἡγεμονικόν}] is meant that which is most truly soul proper, in which arise presentations [\textit{αἱ φαντασίαι}] and impulses [\textit{αἱ ὁρμαί}] and from which issues rational speech’ (trans. Hicks). According to Arius Didymus, ‘Every soul has some ruling faculty [\textit{ἡγεμονικόν τι}] in it; and this is its life and perception and impulse’ (fr. phys. 39 Diels=\textit{SVF} ii. 821, trans. Powers). Cf. S.E. M. 9. 102; 7. 236–7.


\textsuperscript{42} Seneca gives the example of a hen (\textit{Ep}. 121. 19). Cicero, Plutarch, and Athenaeus independently describe the interest Chrysippus took in the pea crab, \textit{pinnotheres pismus} (whose name preserves the Greek verb \textit{τηρεῖν}), because of its supposedly commensalistic relation to the \textit{pinna} mollusc (Cic. \textit{Fin}. 3. 63=LS 57F=\textit{SVF} iii. 369; ND 2. 123–4=\textit{SVF} ii. 729; Plut. \textit{Soll. an.} 980 λ=\textit{SVF} ii. 729b; Athen. 89 c–d=\textit{SVF} ii. 729a).
what is fine since virtue, as the Stoics conceive it, consists in a perfected state of the *hēgemonikon* and in the activities which flow from this condition. Under this interpretation, Alexander is to be taken seriously when he observes that Hellenistic disagreements about the nature of the *prōton oikeion* correspond to disagreements about the structure of the human *telos*. As a condition of the *hēgemonikon*, virtue will itself be the primary object of *oikeiōsis* for fully rational agents, and the concern to guard and preserve their own virtue will underwrite and condition each of their first-order activities and impulses. On this account, an animal’s primary impulse to preserve its constitution answers in a straightforward way to a fully rational agent’s concern to preserve her virtue.⁴³

This reconstruction fits the broader pattern of Hellenistic argument emphasized by Brunschwig, and I will argue that it is supported by a range of considerations drawn from Stoic physics and psychology. In particular, the Stoic argument can be seen to rest on a wider analysis of the conditions under which animate organisms quite generally achieve their *telos*. The key to its structure is the supposition that the Stoics apply a single criterion of teleological success to organisms at each level of the *scala naturae*. At each level of the cosmic order, the *hēgemonikon* is also a mode of *pneuma*, the direct vehicle of divine activity in the physical cosmos.⁴⁴ In the human case, the physical perfection of the rational *hēgemonikon*—i.e. virtue—is clearly sufficient for the realization of the human end. If one considers the evidence for Stoicism that is securely free of Academic influence, it appears quite plausible to suppose that other animate organisms similarly achieve their ends, in the Stoics’ view, when they preserve the faculty in which each of their psychic motions originates, so that their activities are correctly administered by nature as a result.⁴⁵ If that supposition is correct, the explana-

---

⁴³ A parallel made largely explicit by Cicero at *Tusc.* 5. 38–9.
⁴⁵ The term ‘preservation’ glosses over some complexities, including especially the fact that the sage appears to achieve virtue only through a lengthy process by which she frees herself from falsehood and previously accumulated cognitive error. To speak of preserving the *hēgemonikon* may thus seem to imply continuity of a sort of perfection that was never there to begin with. Here it is important to distinguish two kinds of development that are implicit but not clearly distinguished in the sources that survive. On the one hand, the activities of animals as the Stoics conceive them appear to conform to nature more or less regularly from birth to death (cf. nn. 111
The Stoic Argument from oikeiōsis

The Stoic Argument from oikeiōsis

The interpretation of animal behaviour developed by the Stoics is part of a general analysis that supports their claim that virtue is sufficient for happiness. This interpretation helps to explain why Stoic texts appear to treat the primary impulse as the unified basis of appropriate actions (kathēkonta), whether self- or other-directed, and also why the Stoics regard an analysis of animal psychology as instructive for the human case.

4. Representation and motivation

Each of the interpretations of oikeiōsis so far considered treats the self-preserving behaviour of animals as such as a primary concern of the oikeiōsis theory. Each also treats Stoic claims about self-perception as a philosophically interesting but more or less ancillary concern, one largely independent of the doctrine’s ethical import. There are two general reasons for supposing that this focus is misplaced. First, the self-preserving behaviour of animals is a datum common to Stoic and Academic versions of the oikeiōsis account, and it plays a comparable role in the ethical arguments of both schools (Cic. Fin. 2. 33; 4. 16; 5. 24; ND 3. 33; Stob. 2. 118).

and 115 below). In the human case, however, this developmental process goes off the rails at an early stage because of human beings’ susceptibility to external influences (on which see esp. M. Graver, Stoicism and Emotion (Chicago, 2007), ch. 7). The starting-points of nature, says Diogenes, are never corrupt, but rational agents are corrupted, ‘sometimes by the persuasiveness of things from without, sometimes through the teaching of associates’ (D.L. 7. 89=SVF iii. 228, trans. Graver). As a result, the ideal of sagehood seems usually to be conceived of as a kind of recovery from errors that universally affect human agents (cf. esp. Galen, PHP 5. 5. 9–20). This picture supposes another ideal in the background of the Stoic view, however: the theoretical possibility of a human being whose cognitions are never distorted in the first place, so that her actions conform to nature from start to finish. It is in this sense that preserving one’s ἡγεμονικόν would presumably guarantee conformity to nature all along, a realization of the τέλος at every stage of development. The possibility of this sort of diachronic conformity to nature seems to be envisioned by Seneca’s discussion of oikeiōsis in Letter 121.

Inwood suggests that ‘Hierocles’ decision to focus on self-perception as the central question is both deliberate and unusual’ (‘Hierocles’, 155). See further ibid. 157: ‘Why this obsession with one theme [self-perception], to the disadvantage of hormē and of oikeiōsis itself?’ Contrast Long, ‘Representation’, 254–5 and 269 n. 12. I agree with Long that perception and self-perception are foundational to the Stoic theory. As I argue below, these features of the oikeiōsis doctrine support the Stoic claim that virtue is a wholly cognitive condition.

Many of the Stoics’ examples of self-preserving animal behaviour belong to a common stock of received zoological wisdom. It is useful to compare the examples...
What distinguishes the position of each school is rather the details of the psychological account offered to explain it. Stoic sources insist, as Antiochean sources do not, that animal activity of any sort is made possible only by the animal’s perception of itself, and that this awareness always accompanies and informs its perception of what is external (Cic. *Fin.* 3. 16 = SVF iii. 182; Hier. *El. Eth.*, col. vi. 1–10). Second, it is clear from late discussions of oikeiōsis that Stoic claims about self-perception—rather than self-preservation *per se*—became a particular point of contention with rival schools, one that surfaces provocatively in overtly ethical contexts. Thus Seneca argues, in a letter ostensibly devoted to ethical concerns, that an animal is able to co-ordinate its movements only through the perception (*sensus*) of its own constitution (*constitutio*) and that a capacity for self-perception, even if confused or inarticulate, must therefore be present at birth (Ep. 121. 9 = LS 57B). Similarly, the primary aim of Hierocles’ ethical treatise is to defend the Stoic theory of oikeiōsis against critics who reject Stoic claims about perception in particular.

These points suggest that we should not expect the ethical significance of the Stoic argument to turn narrowly on the claim that animals seek to preserve themselves but on the distinctive psychological explanation the Stoics offer for this mode of behaviour. Here it is important to distinguish clearly between three elements of the oikeiōsis accounts: (1) activities directed towards an animal’s physical survival, prominently emphasized by Seneca and Hierocles; (2) an animal’s primary impulse to preserve and maintain its own constitution (*sustasis*), mentioned by Diogenes and confirmed by other texts; (3) the phenomenon of self-perception, which the Stoics take to be a precondition of motivation generally. On the one hand, it is clear that Hierocles and Seneca present (1) as evidence of the psychology associated with (2) and (3), i.e. that the Stoics appeal to the self-preserving behaviour of animals in order to establish their claims about self-perception and the primary impulse. This supposition is uncontroversial, and it fits the pattern of argument pre-

---

served in each of the main sources. Commentators have further assumed, however, that the Stoics narrowly associate the psychology of (2) and (3) with (1), i.e. that they treat self-perception and the primary impulse as the motivational basis of only those patterns of appropriate behaviour—such as the pursuit of food or flight from predators—that are narrowly directed towards an animal’s physical survival. This further assumption explains why commentators have regarded the primary impulse of Diogenes’ account as an inadequate basis for the impulses of the fully rational sage and why they have treated it, instead, as a form of motivation that must either be abandoned by fully rational agents or somehow integrated with concern for and appropriation to others.

I believe this latter assumption—that according to Stoic theory self-perception and the primary impulse ground narrowly self-preserving or self-directed behaviours—should be given up. This is the assumption that motivates the alleged distinction between personal and social forms of *oikeiōsis*, but it is not required by the dialectical structure of the Stoic argument, and it fits poorly with additional features of the Stoics’ view, including, in particular, their well-attested interest in the co-operative behaviour of social animals. It is clear that the Stoics regard the self-preserving behaviour of animals as evidence of their capacity to perceive themselves and of their consequent impulse to preserve their natural constitutions. It is not clear, however, that they regard an animal’s perception and preservation of its constitution as the basis of narrowly self-preserving behaviour alone. The Stoics might well appeal to the self-preserving behaviour of animals as evidence for a particular motivational account without supposing, in addition, that this account explains only behaviour of that form.

The clearest confirmation of this interpretation is found in the psychological details that underpin the *oikeiōsis* theory. These emerge most clearly in the fragmentary remains of the Hierocles manuscript, which preserves in greater detail than any other source the Stoic analysis of *phantasia* and *hormē* in non-rational animals and indicates the broader basis of this analysis in the Stoic (and largely Chrysippean) doctrine of *pneuma*. The primary aim of Hierocles’ treatise is not to show that animals preserve themselves from birth, but that the co-ordinated behaviour this requires can be

---

50 The edited text with Italian commentary appears in Bastianini and Long, ‘Hierocles’. 
explained only by a mode of cognition that registers the teleological significance of the animal’s own faculties. The thrust of the treatise is strikingly similar to that of Seneca’s *Letter* 121 in that it is directed against critics who reject Stoic claims about self-perception in particular.\(^{51}\) The manuscript begins with a short argument to show that ‘an animal differs in two respects from what is not an animal: perception and also impulse’ (col. 1. 31–3). Hierocles then narrows his focus to perception in particular (col. 1. 33–7).\(^{52}\) In the text that follows he attacks the critics of self-perception by drawing their attention, first and foremost, to a range of behavioural phenomena easily taken for granted. These include the animal’s pursuit of its own physical survival, but they also extend to more complex forms of co-operation with other animals. Thus Hierocles emphasizes that a bull *perceives* the use of its horns (and Epictetus adds that it deploys them in defence of the herd).\(^{53}\) Other animals are said, strikingly, to perceive their own co-operative arrangement (*sum-basis*) with other animals.\(^{54}\)

The inferences Hierocles draws from this catalogue of observations are intended to demonstrate the fact of self-perception, but they are also intended, as his preamble makes clear, to support a more general explanation of animal motivation in terms of cognition and, in particular, in terms of cognition whose content is both evaluative and factive. This account is rooted in the Stoics’ highly specific analysis of the physical soul in animate organisms, which Hierocles takes some care to explain at the outset of his treatise (*El. Eth.*, col. 1. 1–37).\(^{55}\) According to this analysis, the organic body of an animal is itself a compound of *pneuma*, an admixture of the active elements of air and fire together with the passive elements of earth and water with which it is further interblended. This compound is

---

\(^{51}\) One class of these critics appears to deny that self-perception occurs at all; the other denies that it occurs as soon as an animal is born. See Inwood, ‘Hierocles’, 156–8 and 167–78; Long, ‘Representation’, 255.

\(^{52}\) ‘We do not need to speak of the latter of these for the moment, but it seems appropriate to say a few things about perception, for this contributes to cognition of the first appropriate thing [*φέρει γὰρ εἰς γνῶσιν τοῦ πρώτου οἰκείου*], which is the subject we said is the best starting-point for the elements of ethics’ (my translation).


\(^{55}\) ‘The Stoic analysis on which Hierocles draws is well attested in other sources. A thorough discussion is A. A. Long, ‘Soul and Body in Stoicism’ [‘Soul and Body’], in id., *Stoic Studies*, 224–49.'
responsible for the functions of nutrition and growth, and it is common to plants and animals alike. In animate organisms, however, *pneuma* has a further, higher-order expression the Stoics identify as soul properly speaking (S.E. M. 7. 234 = LS 53F; cf. D.L. 7. 138–9 = LS 47O = SVF ii. 634). When a plant-like embryo leaves the womb, a portion of its leading faculty or nature (*phusis*) is cooled by contact with air so that its tensional properties begin to sustain the capacities of *phantasia* and *hormē* required for animal motion (Plut. *Stoic. repugn*. 1052 f–1053 λ; Hier. *El. Eth.*, col. 1. 15–34). These capacities, which belong to the animal’s *hēgemonikon*, are held to be the defining features of animate organisms, and the Stoics analyse them as capacities for two distinct types of motion: *phantasia* being a passive alteration (*kinesis*) that represents its cause, *hormē* being an active movement (*kinesis*) of hegemonic *pneuma* reactively reaching towards the represented object. Both types of motion are expressions of the divine and active principle working in passive matter to bring about its providential aims.

Commentators have sometimes emphasized the segmented character of cognitive development as the Stoics conceive it: the sharp difference between the cognitive abilities of children and adults or the starkness of the gap between the conditions of virtue and vice.

---


57 As *στοιχεῖα*, earth and water are also compounds of god and featureless matter. But as Long puts it, it is in air and fire that god appears in propria persona, as it were (‘Soul and Body’, 249). These active elements of which *pneuma* is comprised are most closely analogous to the active organizing features of divine reason at earlier stages of cosmogenesis and to the original, primal *στοιχείων* characterized by Zeno (perhaps proleptically, as Cooper suggests) as designing fire (*πῦρ τεχνικόν*), by Cleanthes as flame (*φλόξ*), and by Chrysippus as a flash (*αὐγή*). See Cooper, ‘Elements’. Cf. Marc. Aur. *Med.* 11. 20; Alex. Aphr. *Mist.* 218. 2–10 Bruns.

58 E.g. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, 40. On the Stoic account of concepts, animal perception is largely if not wholly non-conceptual. For the view that animals have ‘quasi-concepts’ according to the Stoics see Brittain, ‘Perception’. Contemporary accounts resembling the Stoic view of non-conceptual perception include that of Gareth Evans: ‘Most organisms have at least a rudimentary capacity to recognize at least some among other members of their own species, if only their parents and offspring; and since so much of an organism’s welfare (especially among the social animals) is dependent upon successful interrelation with other members of its
The Stoic account of the animal soul ensures, however, that the faculties that control and explain the motivations of non-rational animals are parallel in basic respects to the human case.\(^5^9\) This isomorphism is required, in part, by the fact that the Stoics treat the division between *phantasia* and *hormē* as an exhaustive classification of the motions to which the animal soul is subject above the level of nutrition and growth. *Phantasia* itself is an exceedingly broad category in Stoic theory, covering every mode of cognition to which non-rational and rational animals are subject.\(^6^0\) In the rational case, memory (*mnēmē*), concepts (*ennoiai*), belief (*doxa*), knowledge (*katalēpsis*), and experience (*empeiria*) are all defined in terms of *phantasia*, and virtue is itself a physical configuration of the soul built up from assents to propositionally structured impressions (*phantasai*). The impressions that belong to animals, on the other hand, are not fully conceptual or propositional in the Stoics’ sense, and it is unclear to what extent animals may entertain a generalized piece of content independently of overtly perceptual states, on the Stoic account.\(^6^1\) In animals too, however, *phantasia* involves an object of which the animal is made aware through its causal impact within the soul—an imprint, in Zeno’s terminology—so that in veridical cases of perception the phenomenal character of the representation is causally linked to the perceived object.\(^6^2\) The basic ele-


\(^6^0\) According to the Stoics, *φαντασία* is the most basic representational faculty, and every other kind of mental representation is explicated in its terms. In this respect the Stoic taxonomy of mental states differs importantly from Aristotle’s. For both Aristotle and the Stoics, desire of the most basic sort (*ὄρεξις* for Aristotle, *ὁρμή* for the Stoics) requires *αἴσθησις*. On the Stoic account, but not on Aristotle’s, *αἴσθησις* also requires *φαντασία*. Hence on the Stoic account, but not on Aristotle’s, desire of any form requires *φαντασία*. Aristotle attributes *ὄρεξις* and *αἴσθησις* to some animals which lack *φαντασία* (*DA* 414\(^\text{b}\), 428\(^\text{a}\)–11; cf. H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 2006), ch. 10). On the Stoic account of *φαντασία* see Long, ‘Representation’, 266–75.


\(^6^2\) According to the basic Stoic definition, a *φαντασία* is ‘a pathos occurring in the soul, which reveals itself and its cause’ (Aēt. *Plac.* 4. 12. 1–5=LS 39B=SVF ii. 54,
ments of this analysis cut across the differences between the highly conceptualized modes of cognition that belong to rational agents and the non-rational perceptions of other animals.

One of Hierocles’ central concerns, then, is to show that the behaviours he catalogues are rooted in the soul’s capacity to represent the world through physical interaction with it. From the point of view of action theory, what is most significant in this account is not the thesis that motivation always occurs in conjunction with an appropriately discriminating mental representation. It is rather the claim that cognition of this form determines impulse, that an organism’s activities are caused and controlled by mental states that have, as we would now say, the cognitive direction of fit, whose function is to grasp and conform to the contours of the world. In animals and human agents alike, the outward motions of impulse are engendered and wholly explained by representations arising in the perceptive pneuma of the animal’s hēgemonikon. In the human case, such representations may be propositional, susceptible of verbal articulation, and conditioned by a range of antecedent cognitive conditions that also have a propositional and conceptual content. Though an animal’s impressions of this form are not of comparable structure and complexity, they are nonetheless inchoate analogues of the impressions that belong to human agents. Even in animals, such impressions appear to require the possibility of content that minimally includes an evaluative component, representing the world in a manner capable of producing and structuring impulse in ways commensurate with the animal’s faculties and basic needs. Without exception phantasia is the causal basis of impulse, and its content explains the force and direction of an animal’s activities.

As Inwood has emphasized, these distinctive psychological claims are notably absent from parallel accounts of animal psychology found in Antiochean sources. Though perception is said in De finibus 4 and 5 to guide and shape an animal’s impulses as it trans. Long and Sedley). Zeno seems to have characterized an instance of φαντασία as a τύπωσις (imprint), while Chrysippus preferred the less committal ἑτεροίωσις (alteration). See S.E. M. 7. 236 (=SVF i. 58). Representations lacking the appropriate causal connection to the world are φανταστικά or φαντάσματα, in the Stoic scheme. See D.L. 7. 49 (=LS 39A=SVF ii. 52); Aët. 4. 12. 1–5 (=LS 39B=SVF ii. 54).

63 Such impressions, that is to say, are informed by ἔννοιαι (conceptions) and have λεκτά (verbalizable representations) as their content. I do not mean to imply a direct equivalence between these Stoic categories and contemporary ones.

64 Inwood, ‘Hierocles’, 175–8.
matures, it is not there presented as a sine qua non of motivation generally, nor is it regarded as a faculty responsible for generating impulse as soon as the animal is born. By contrast, Stoic versions of oikeiōsis make it clear that accurate cognition is the sole basis of teleologically appropriate behaviour in animals and humans alike. Hierocles’ account of the psychology that underpins animal behaviour corresponds, therefore, to an important and controversial Stoic claim about the structure of rational motivation: namely, that there are no sources of impulse that are not governed by cognitive appraisals of some form. Though it supports more complex discursive and inferential functions than those that occur in animals, the rational faculty that controls right action in human agents does so through an accurate representational grip on the world. On the Stoic account, appropriate action in animate organisms generally is preceded and structured by a cognitive grasp of the natural order.

5. Self-perception

The Stoics’ concern to defend the motivational priority of cognition, however, does not wholly explain their insistence on the phenomenon of self-perception or the attention devoted to it by Seneca and Hierocles. Both authors are also concerned to demonstrate that the purposeful, kind-appropriate behaviour animals display is to be explained by self-perception in particular. Whereas perception underlies animal behaviour generally, self-perception explains an animal’s capacity for behaviour that is kind-relative. Hierocles’ examples are carefully chosen to emphasize this point: an animal’s activities are appropriately keyed to its individual nature and faculties. They must therefore be rooted in its capacity to grasp, through perception, the distinctive features of its own constitution. Like the Stoic analysis of phantasia, this analysis depends on physical and psychological features that are common to animals and human

65 According to Chrysippus, ‘Reason is a collection of certain conceptions and preconceptions’ (Galen, PHP 5. 3. 1 = LS 53V = SVF ii. 841; trans. Long and Sedley). Cf. Cic. Tusc. 5. 39: ‘if this [rational] soul has been so trained, if its power of vision has been so cared for that it is not blinded by error, the result is mind made perfect, that is, complete reason, and this means also virtue’ (trans. King). On the Stoic account of reason see M. Schofield, The Stoic Idea of the City (Cambridge, 1991), 70–1; Frede, ‘Reason’; J. Cooper, ‘Stoic Autonomy’, in id., Knowledge, Nature, and the Good: Essays on Ancient Philosophy (Princeton, 2004), 204–44 at 216–18; Brittain, ‘Common Sense’. 
agents. Self-perception originates at birth, together with the soul’s capacity for *phantasia*, when the causal interaction of the newly formed soul and the organic body engenders in the animal a perception of its own constitution. As soon as it is born, Hierocles maintains, an animal possesses an impression (*phantasia*) of itself, which develops over time into a more refined grasp of its own characteristic features (*idiōmata*). The animal is pleased (*euarestein*) with this representation, appropriated to its constitution (*sustasis*), and disposed to care for itself as a result (cols. vi. 22–51; vii. 40–61). Seneca similarly takes pains to emphasize that this reflexive awareness, though inarticulate at the outset, is nonetheless present from birth as a necessary condition of an animal’s subsequent impulses (*Ep*. 121. 14–17).

The form of self-perception involved in *oikeiōsis* has occasionally been associated with self-consciousness or with notions of the self quite broadly construed. But although Hierocles sometimes characterizes this form of cognition as *aisthēsis heautou*—self-perception—it is clear from a number of texts that the self that is the object of perception is not an abstract entity shading into later notions of selfhood. Like the primary impulse of Diogenes’ account, self-perception is directed at the creature’s constitution (its *sustasis* or, as later sources tend to represent it, its *kataskeuē*). This is, roughly, the array of physical capacities nature has given it, of the sort Hierocles catalogues at length in his treatise. Seneca, moreover, preserves an important technical elaboration of this notion: A creature’s constitution (*constitutio*) is its *hēgemonikon* or soul in the strictest sense, the ‘leading part of the soul in a certain disposition relative to the body’ (*Ep*. 121. 10 = LS 29F = *SVF* iii. 184, trans. Inwood).66 This high-level mode of *pneuma* suffuses the animal’s faculties in one of the specific modes of mixture distinguished by Chrysippus, a blending in which each element (1) preserves its own nature but (2) is spatially continuous with other elements of the mixture at every point (Alex. Aphr. Mixt. 216. 14–218. 6 Bruns = LS 48C = *SVF* ii. 473; cf. D.L. 7. 151 = LS 48A = *SVF* ii. 479; Plut. Comm. not. 1078 Ε = LS 48B = *SVF* ii. 480). An animal’s perception of its constitution arises from the thorough admixture of the perceptive *pneuma* that constitutes the

---

hēgemonikon with the animal’s organic body and from the fact that these two causally impinge on one other. What animate organisms perceive through self-perception is neither the soul nor the body on its own, but rather the interrelation of the hēgemonikon and the organic matter through which it passes.\footnote{67}

Two further features of the attitude associated with self-perception in Stoic sources are worth emphasizing. Commentators have sometimes compared the Stoic account of this capacity to contemporary accounts of proprioception or the general monitoring of bodily states by an organism’s nervous system. Some of Hierocles’ examples certainly support this comparison. Self-perception continues through sleep, for example, and it appears to play a role in regulating basic autonomic functions \((El. Eth., cols. iv. 54–v. 31)\).\footnote{68}

It should be emphasized, however, that even in non-rational animals self-perception does not appear to be limited to low-level representations of this sort. Some of the examples in Hierocles and Seneca have nothing to do with spatial perception, kinaesthetic awareness, or autonomic function, but with much more determinate modes of perception and action, as when an animal recognizes and observes its own co-operative arrangements with other animals \((El. Eth., col. iii. 23)\) or when a toddler, recognizing a bipedal orientation as consistent with its physical capacities, struggles, even in the teeth of pain, to stand upright \((Ep. 121. 8=LS 57B)\). In fact self-perception of some form appears to attend every perceptual representation of the soul that occurs in animate organisms above the level of nutrition and growth. As such, it appears to include both conscious and unconscious modes of representation without

\footnote{67 It is not clear whether an organism’s σύστασις is the hēgemonikon strictly speaking or the ἤγεμονικόν together with the matter it most directly affects. Brennan argues for the former account while Inwood, as I understand him, adopts something closer to the latter view. See Brennan, ‘Souls’, 402–3; Inwood, \textit{Ethics and Human Action}, 190 and 313 n. 40; Inwood, \textit{Seneca}, 337. Some ambiguity between these views may be present in the Stoic understanding of the ἤγεμονικόν itself, which is both \((a)\) the controlling faculty of the organism and \((b)\) that which makes the organism the kind of creature it is, its ‘principle of organization’, as Powers puts it (‘Argument’, 257). For my purposes, the relevant claim is that an animal’s soul registers both its own affections and those of its organic body, so that both are perceived by the animal \((Hier. El. Eth., cols. iii. 57–iv. 53)\). Cf. Pembroke ‘\textit{Oikeiōsis}’, 119.}

\footnote{68 At \textit{El. Eth.}, col. ii. 35–46, a toad is said to co-perceive itself together with the interval it is about to jump. Perception of this form closely resembles the non-conceptual, egocentric, and proprioceptive forms of spatial perception discussed by Gareth Evans \((Reference, 220–4)\). Even in these cases, however, συναίσθησις as the Stoics conceive it appears to involve a mental representation derived from an object’s causal effect on the animal’s soul.}
being limited to either. The examples of self-perception cited by Seneca and Hierocles connect it with a variety of functional roles associated with the regulation of kind-appropriate behaviour.

It is worth noting as well that the Stoics appear to regard the attitude involved in animal self-perception as a broadly veridical or factive state. This is not because they regard mental representations in general as true, but because the category of aisthēsis as they conceive it applies only to veridical cases of perception (Aët. Plac. 4. 8. 1 = SVF ii. 850; 4. 8. 12 = SVF ii. 72; 4. 9. 4 = SVF ii. 78). In addition to aisthēsis heautou and sunaisthēsis, the most frequent term applied to an animal’s self-awareness by Hierocles is antilēpsis. The latter term is notable for its appearance in Plutarch’s reference to oikeiōsis as a grasp (antilēpsis) of what is appropriate and, like aisthēsis, it seems to function as a success term, marking the cognition associated with oikeiōsis as one restricted, like katalēpsis in the human case, to a mental attitude that successfully grasps its object. This need not imply that the non-rational representations involved in animal self-perception are truth-evaluable, but it does imply that the Stoics regard them as evaluable in some way on the

---

60 By a conscious mental state I mean, roughly, a mental state the subject is aware of being in. This functional sense of ‘conscious’ should be distinguished from a usage such as that of e.g. David Chalmers, who employs it programmatically to characterize mental states that have phenomenal content (e.g. The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory (Oxford, 1996), 25–9). Proprerceptive mental states (and perhaps animal perceptions generally) may be representational mental states without being states the subject is aware of being in, and on many accounts mental states (such as tacit beliefs or judgements) may be representational but lack phenomenal content.

70 Cf. the second sense of αἴσθησις distinguished at D.L. 7. 52 (= SVF ii. 71) and employed at Stob. 2. 82. 31. It is in this second sense, presumably, that Chrysippus called αἴσθησις the criterion of truth (D.L. 7. 54 = LS 40A = SVF ii. 105). Cf. also F. H. Sandbach, Aristotle and the Stoics (Cambridge, 1985), 22: ‘For the Stoics phantasia preceded aisthēsis, which was always true, being the perception of something really there.’

71 As G. Boys-Stones observes, at least in Hierocles’ usage συναίσθησις presupposes but is distinct from αἴσθησις ἑαυτοῦ (‘Physiognomy and Ancient Psychological Theory’, in id. et al., Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon’s Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam (Oxford, 2007), 19–124 at 85). I have adopted Boys-Stones’s translation of συναίσθησις as ‘co-perception’ here.

72 That is, ἀντίληψις connotes at least some grasp of the perceived object and implies some degree of representational conformity to the world. Some sources (e.g. S.E. M. 7. 424 = LS 40L = SVF ii. 68) seem to treat κατάληψις as a form of ἀντίληψις, one that is propositional, true, and wholly stable. In the animal case, ἀντίληψις does not satisfy these conditions, but it may nonetheless be capable of guiding the animal in a way that is appropriate to and commensurate with the kind of animal it is. Cf. Aët. Plac. 4. 8. 1 (= SVF ii. 850).
basis of their fit with the world. The impressions that occur in animals do not have a fully conceptual or propositional structure, and it seems clear that they do not satisfy the formal set of conditions associated with kataleptic impressions. They nonetheless appear to have in common with kataleptic impressions both that they are factive and that they are capable of grasping the world in a way that allows the animal to recognize, with greater or lesser accuracy, a particular object or course of action as appropriate to perform. As a capacity for representation, self-perception can be evaluated even in animals by its fidelity to the contours of the world.\textsuperscript{73}

It is probably impossible to recover a fine-grained account of the kind of content the Stoics associated with self-perception or a detailed understanding of the way in which it was thought to co-ordinate sophisticated animal behaviour. What seems clear from the \textit{oikeiōsis} accounts, however, is that the doctrine of self-perception supplies a crucial link, within the Stoic system, between cosmic teleology and psychological theory. A creature’s constitution—the set of faculties permeated and held together by its psychic \textit{pneuma}—provides a reference point for each of its first-order impulses. Constitutions are, crucially, constituted by nature for a purpose, and they function as a kind of template that encodes, as it were, the patterns of behaviour that belong to each kind of creature. It seems clear, moreover, that the appropriateness of an animal’s behaviour strongly depends, in this scheme, on its ability to grasp these patterns through self-perception. What an animal’s self-perception grounds, specifically, is \textit{appropriate} modes

\textsuperscript{73} If this seems a surprising conjunction of views, it is worth noting that it has analogues in the contemporary literature on perception and especially in views about non-conceptual content. On accounts such as those of Gareth Evans and Christopher Peacocke, the content of animal perception is non-conceptual but nonetheless evaluable in virtue of the representational information it conveys. In Evans’s view, the non-conceptual content of a mental perception ‘permits of a non-derivative classification as \textit{true} or \textit{false}’ in virtue of its functional role, even if its subject lacks the concepts that are constituents of the evaluation \textit{(Reference, 226–7)}. Peacocke restricts truth-evaluability to content that is propositional and hence (on a Fregean account of propositions) conceptual. He nonetheless regards the non-conceptual content of perception as ‘content which is evaluable as correct or incorrect’ (‘Does Perception Have a Nonconceptual Content?’, \textit{Journal of Philosophy}, 98 (2001), 239–64 at 239–40). The Stoic position resembles the latter view in that the Stoics restrict judgements of truth and falsity to \textit{λεκτά}, where these are the contents of the conceptually structured representations (\textit{φαντασίαι λογικαι}) that belong exclusively to rational agents. On such an account, though an animal’s perceptions are not fully conceptual, they may nonetheless be evaluated as correct or incorrect in virtue of their phenomenal content, functional role, or both.
The Stoic Argument from oikeiōsis

of action, and it does so through representations that are in some way factive or correct. Conversely, even in animals defective motivation and action would seem to involve, on the Stoic theory, some failure of cognition. What we have in the oikeiōsis account, it thus appears, is a motivational theory that aims to explain appropriate action in both animals and humans on the basis of self-awareness and accurate cognition. This is, I suggest, a characteristically Stoic extension of a Socratic point, one that applies a cognitive theory of motivation—remarkably—to a much wider analysis of living organisms.

How the primary impulse was thought to arise from self-perception and why the Stoics regard it as a necessary condition of motivation generally are further matters for conjecture, but the fundamental role of self-perception in determining an organism’s impulses strongly suggests that, like the mechanism of self-perception, the primary impulse was thought to underlie the full range of activities appropriate to an organism. Though most of the behaviours mentioned by Stoic sources are narrowly geared towards the animal’s physical survival, some of them are not. What all rather have in common is that they are guided by an in-born awareness that enables the creature to act in just the ways that nature constituted it to act. Brad Inwood has plausibly argued that the primary impulse of Diogenes’ account is an instance of what the Stoics call a hormetic disposition (hexis hormētikē), a fundamental orientation that explains why an animal ‘undertakes action to preserve itself, avoiding things which harm it and pursuing things which are appropriate or natural to it’. I would add that the Stoics appear to regard this disposition not simply as the psychological basis for behaviour of this form, but as a disposition, rooted in self-perception, that co-ordinates all of an animal’s kind-relative behaviours. It should perhaps be thought of not as a further psychological element distinct from self-perception, but rather as the motivational side of the animal’s self-directed cognition, much as impulse in general seems to be the motivational side of a hormetic impression.

The focus on self-preserving behaviour can be explained by the fact that it is the most widespread and readily observable form of animal behaviour and by the likelihood that it therefore became the focus of debate among rival schools, which offered differing psychological accounts to explain it.

Inwood, Ethics and Human Action, 190–1.

This characterization, I am aware, invites difficult questions about the kind of
Attempts at further reconstruction are necessarily speculative, but one suggestive detail of Stoic physics deserves consideration: namely, that the Stoics clearly envision a close connection between the physical properties of an organism’s *hēgemonikon* and its ability to perform the functions that belong to it. Our evidence for this relationship is clearest in the rational case, where an explicit connection is drawn between representational error and the internal tension of the *hēgemonikon*. Stoic texts describe failures of perception and impulse in terms of a mismatch between the representational content of perceptual states and the world, but they also characterize them as a slackening of the perceptive *pneuma* that extends from the heart and penetrates each of the sense organs.⁷⁷ In human agents, this condition precipitates assent to non-kataleptic impressions and, sooner or later, accession to the violent impulses of the passions. In human beings right action is secured by accurate cognition, and accurate cognition is secured, in turn, through an appropriate tension (or perhaps through appropriate *tensions*) in the soul’s hegemonic *pneuma*. Though we have less explicit testimony about the animal case, the details of Stoic physics and psychology strongly suggest a similar order of explanation.⁷⁸ In animals too perception and impulse appear to supervene on the tensional properties of hegemonic mental state a ὁρμή is supposed to be: for example, whether ὁρμή is the causal result of a purely representational state or whether it is a single state that performs the functions of both representation and motivation, thereby resembling the ‘desires’ of some contemporary theories. I am here suggesting the latter sort of account and thinking, in particular, of Margaret Graver’s characterization of the evaluative content of a hormetic impression as registering its ‘motivational aspect’. See Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 44.

⁷⁷ Galen, *PHP* 4. 6. 2–3 (=LS 65T=SVF iii. 473); 5. 2. 25–8 (=SVF iii. 471). Cf. Cic. *Tusc*. 4. 31. The possibility of a mismatch extends to ὁρμαί in that they are a product of evaluative representations and may be correct or incorrect as such. On the relationship between slackness (ἀτονία) of soul and failures of perception and impulse see esp. Kerferd, ‘Origin’, 489–92. As Kerferd puts it, ‘When there is a good state of tension in the soul—eutonia—a man judges rightly and does well’ (490). So too ‘wrong judgements . . . are themselves κινῆσεις and ἕρμαι and are all cases of the *hēgemonikon* disposed in a particular way’ (491). On the physical basis of Stoic virtue see further M. Schofield, ‘Cardinal Virtues: A Contested Socratic Inheritance’, in A. G. Long (ed.), *Plato and the Stoics* (Cambridge, 2013), 11–28 at 19–21.

⁷⁸ According to Stobaeus, ‘Proper function [τὸ καθῆκον] also extends to the non-rational animals, for these too display a kind of activity which is consequential upon their own nature’ (2. 85=LS 59B=SVF iii. 494, trans. Long and Sedley). According to Diogenes, ‘Proper function [τῆς καθήκου] is an activity [ἐνέργημα] appropriate to constitutions that accord with nature [ταῖς κατὰ φύσιν κατασκευαίς οἰκεῖον]’ (D.L. 7. 108=LS 59C=SVF iii. 493, trans. Long and Sedley).
pneuma, and it is through these faculties that nature regulates (oikonomein) their activities. The Stoics may well have thought of the slackening of hegemonic tension in animals as a kind of falling away or loosening of pneuma’s controlling grip on the organism, engendering an imprecision in its perceptions and impulses.

One way of understanding the impulse to self-preservation, then, is as a creature’s inborn tendency, implanted by nature, to sustain the tensional properties of its hēgemonikon in a way that guarantees the accuracy of its representations and the appropriateness of its impulses. So understood, self-preservation involves preserving the very properties that determine the animal’s motions, ensuring the correct relationship between the animal’s psychic pneuma and the organic matter it permeates and controls. Such a view might be spelt out in different ways consistently with the physical model implied by the sources. What is crucial to the oikeiosis account, however, is that the primary impulse to self-preservation, as the Stoics conceive it, appears to be satisfied when each of an animal’s first-order impulses and activities is commensurate with the kind of creature it is. In perceiving and preserving its hēgemonikon, an

79 That is to say, impression and impulse cannot occur without corresponding changes in the physical configuration of the ἡγεμονικόν itself. This point follows trivially from the Stoic claim that impressions and impulses are alterations of hegemonic πνεῦμα (e.g. S.E. M. 7. 236–7). It should be distinguished from both (1) the claim that impressions and impulses supervene on properties or states of the sense organs with which the ἡγεμονικόν is interblended and (2) efforts to give a general characterization of the relation between physical states of the ἡγεμονικόν and phenomenal or representational mental content. Since we have determinate evidence for just one type of content associated with φαντασία—the incorporeal λεκτά that are said to subsist (ἱσταμέναι) in accordance with rational impressions (D.L. 7. 63 = LS 33F; 7. 49 = LS 33D = SVF ii. 52)—it is not easy to give a general account of the latter relation as the Stoics conceive it.

80 It might be, for instance, that the Stoics think of the primary impulse as an orientation whose satisfaction consists in the appropriate functioning of the creature, so that accurate perception and appropriate impulse are constitutive of self-preservation as the Stoics understand it. It is worth remembering in this connection that Chrysippus identifies action (whether he means capacity or activity is unclear) with the ἡγεμονικόν itself. It therefore seems possible that he included καθήκοντα—those actualizations or functions (ἐνεργήματα) of these capacities that are oikeion to an organism’s constitution—within the scope of the primary impulse. See Sen. Ep. 113. 23 (= LS 53L = SVF ii. 836), on which see B. Inwood, ‘Walking and Talking: Reflections on Divisions of the Soul in Stoicism’, in K. Corcilius and D. Perler (eds.), Partitioning the Soul: Debates from Plato to Leibniz (Berlin, 2014), 63–83 at 69–70. Alternatively, the Stoics might suppose that an appropriate tension in the soul’s commanding part is causally sufficient to ensure the correctness of an animal’s perceptions and impulses, so that satisfying the primary impulse is distinct from but nonetheless secures appropriate function.
animal is at the same time guarding the integrity of the representations and impulses that originate there, bringing them into line with the constitution given to it by nature. As long as the pneuma that constitutes it as a living organism is maintained in its proper condition, each of an animal’s activities will conform, like the content of its representations, to the patterns of nature itself.

This analysis is reflected in each of the oikeiōsis accounts that can be reliably associated with the Stoics independently of Antiochean sources, and it makes a crucial difference to interpreting the Stoic theory. In particular, it explains why the Stoics themselves did not distinguish narrowly between personal and social forms of oikeiōsis or between an animal’s self- and other-regarding activities. That misleading distinction rests on the supposition, due to Pohlenz, that the primary impulse is a first-order motivation narrowly associated with self-preserving activity. By contrast, on the account I have offered an animal’s impulse to preserve itself is not a first-order motivation in competition with oikeiōsis towards other things (such as offspring or other animals) but is rather the psychological basis of its recognition and appropriation of them as oikeion. An animal’s self-perception and consequent appropriation to self explain its self-preserving behaviour, certainly, but they equally explain other-regarding behaviours such as care for offspring, defence of the herd, and co-operation with other species.81 For an animal to perceive and preserve its constitution is for it to confirm and sustain itself as the kind of thing nature constituted it to be, with all the attendant activities this implies.

6. Constitutions and cosmic teleology

At the heart of the oikeiōsis account, then, is a notion of proper functioning that is closely tied to an animal’s capacity for representing the world and for grasping the teleological significance of its own faculties. If we wish to understand the place of oikeiōsis in Stoic ethical theory, it is important to recognize that the Stoics apply the basic elements of this analysis to both animals and human beings. Notwithstanding differences in the structure and complexity of cognition, the Stoics appeal to self-perception

81 Compare especially Hier. El. Eth., col. iii. 19–29, with Cic. Fin. 3. 65; ND 2. 123–4; and Marc. Aur. Med. 9. 9. See further n. 42 above and sect. 7 below.
and self-preservation to explain teleologically appropriate behaviour in animals and humans alike. Particularly in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, references to one’s constitution (kataskeuē) are freighted with teleological significance. When Epictetus asserts that ‘perception [aisthēsis] of the state of one’s own hēgemonikon is a starting-point for philosophy’, he appears to mean that an understanding of one’s individual nature and character precedes an understanding of right action (Diss. 1. 26. 15). A passage of Tertullian with clearly Stoic antecedents holds that ‘perception is the soul’s very soul’ and that ‘every soul has a practical knowledge of itself, without which knowledge of itself no soul could possibly have exercised its own functions’ (Carn. 12=SVF ii. 845, trans. Holmes). René Brouwer has recently emphasized a neglected passage of Julian’s Orations that ascribes to the Stoics the view that self-knowledge is essential to the human end (Or. 6. 6, 185 D–186 A). In animals as well as human beings, self-perception provides a cognitive basis for the activities that constitute a life according to nature.

The Stoic concern with self-perception is thus not restricted to non-rational animals, and the same is true of self-preservation. Epictetus regularly speaks of preserving (tērein) one’s purpose (prohairesis) or proper character (idion). When he does so, he appears to have in mind the rational hēgemonikon, the configuration

82 e.g., Epict. Diss. 1. 6. 7; 1. 6. 18; 2. 8. 19–20; 2. 10. 4; 3. 6. 10; 3. 24. 63–4; Marc. Aur. Med. 5. 16; 6. 16; 6. 40; 6. 44; 7. 13; 7. 20; 7. 55; 8. 12; 8. 45; Cf. D.L. 7. 108 (=LS 59C=SVF iii. 493).
83 At Diss. 1. 2. 30–2 Epictetus draws an explicit parallel between an animal’s συν-αισθησις of its own capacities (paraskeuē) and the acquisition of moral knowledge in the human case. Cf. also Diss. 1. 1. 4; 1. 6. 37; 1. 20. 1–6. According to Marcus Aurelius (Med. 11. 1), one of the properties of the rational soul is that it sees itself (ἐαυτὴν ὁραῖ). He goes on to say that one becomes good through conceptions (θεωρήματα) both of universal nature and of the distinctively human constitution (Med. 11. 5).
84 Cf. Schmitz, Cato, 24–5. As a corporeal thing, the ἡγεμονικόν is an object of αἰσθησις, and the Stoics do not hesitate to apply a range of normative and aesthetic predicates to the physical structure of πνεῦμα that constitutes virtue in human agents (Stob. 2. 62–3=SVF iii. 78; Cic. Tusc. 4. 13. 30=SVF iii. 79). Appropriate actions are those that ‘contain all the numbers of virtue’ (‘omnes numeros virtutis continent’) in so far as they flow from a ἡγεμονικόν whose quantifiable physical properties preserve a harmony with the cosmos (Cic. Fin. 3. 24=LS 64H=SVF iii. 11). Cf. D.L. 7. 100 (=SVF iii. 83) and A. A. Long, ‘The Harmonics of Stoic Virtue’, in id., Stoic Studies, 202–23 at 211.
of *pneuma* that represents the world and controls assent to impressions in rational agents.\(^{86}\) The same use of *tērein* occurs in Marcus Aurelius, who characterizes the *hēgemonikon* as a *daimōn*, which is to say, *pneuma* at the highest level of expression and the embodiment of divine reason in each human agent.\(^{87}\) Both authors appear to identify the preservation of this faculty in the Stoics’ technical sense with virtue and right action.\(^{88}\) Nor does this appear to be an innovation of later Stoicism. To preserve one’s *daimōn* is identical, as Diogenes makes clear, to living according to human and cosmic nature, engaging ‘in no activity wont to be forbidden by the universal law, which is the right reason pervading everything’ (D.L. 7. 88=LS 63C=SVF iii. 4, trans. Long and Sedley).\(^{89}\) The Stoics identify *eudaimonia* quite literally with the perfection of one’s *daimōn*.

It appears, moreover, that the *oikeiōsis* theory defended by Chrysippus was developed within a wider teleological analysis of organisms generally. Though the Stoics do not extend the categories of goodness or *eudaimonia* to animals, they do speak of the *ends* (*telē*) appropriate to animals and of the conditions under which these ends are realized. Cicero’s criticisms of the Stoic *oikeiōsis* theory mention a treatise in which Chrysippus offered a general survey of animal species, then proceeded to discuss the end appropriate to each (*Fin. 4. 28=SVF iii. 20*).\(^{90}\) Epictetus similarly maintains that ‘of beings whose constitutions [*kataskeuai*] are different, the works [*erga*] and ends [*telē*] are likewise different’ (*Diss. 1. 6. 16–17*). A. A. Long emphasizes the following neglected passage from Hierocles’ treatise on marriage:

> [E]very [non-human] animal lives consistently with its own natural constitution [*τῇ ἑαυτοῦ φυσικῇ κατασκευῇ*]—and every plant indeed too according

\(^{86}\) *Diss. 1. 15. 4; 2. 2. 1; 2. 2. 20; 2. 8. 21–3; 2. 16. 28; 3. 4. 9; 3. 6. 3; 3. 10. 16; 4. 5. 6; *Ench. 4*.


\(^{88}\) See esp. *Epict. Diss. 2. 2. 1–4; 3. 6. 3–4; 3. 10. 16; 4. 5. 6; *Ench. 4*; Marc. Aur. *Med. 7. 17*; 2. 17. A kind of contrapositive principle appears in the *Discourses*, where inappropriate action is said to destroy the characteristic features of a human being: e.g., *Diss. 2. 4. 1–4; 2. 10. 10–18; 2. 22. 15–21; 2. 23. 17–19; 3. 7. 36. I am grateful to Tad Brennan for pointing out several of these references.


\(^{90}\) D.L. 7. 85 (=LS 57A=SVF iii. 178). Cf. Porph. *Abst. 3. 20. 1–23 (=LS 54P).*
to the plants’ so-called life—except that they do not make use of any calculation or counting or acts of selection that depend on testing things: plants live on the basis of bare nature, and [non-human] animals on the basis both of representations that draw them towards things appropriate and of urges that drive them away. (Stob. 4. 502)\(^9\)

It therefore seems clear that the older Stoics gave some account of the ends of animals and that they supposed, in addition, that an organism’s constitution determines the character of its end. An organism’s end answers to its natural impulse to preserve its constitution, and the content of its end depends on the distinctive features of the constitution it aims to preserve.

It is important, however, to distinguish two ways of understanding the teleological framework behind the oikeiōsis account. If the Stoics regard the integrity of the hēgemonikon as a condition that guarantees appropriate action in non-rational animals, as I have argued, a crucial question is whether they also regard it as sufficient to ensure that a non-rational animal achieves its end. Clarity on this point is important for making sense of Stoic appeals to oikeiōsis as a basis for ethical theorizing since, as I have noted, Cicero and Alexander characterize the prōton oikeion as something that is correlative to the account of the end adopted by each school, so that the object of motivational attachment observable in animals and infants corresponds to the end to which a rational agent ought to be attached.\(^9\)


\(^9\) The reliability of Alexander’s report, influenced as it is by Carneades and by Alexander’s own Peripatetic aims, is open to question. Yet Cicero’s consistent agreement on this point (Fin. 3. 17; 4. 15–16; 4. 19; 4. 25; 4. 32–4; 5. 17 = LS 64G; 5. 23–4; 5. 55) and the likelihood that the early Stoic theory of oikeiōsis was developed as a counterpoint to the Epicurean cradle argument tend to confirm Alexander’s claim. Moreover, the basically orthodox Hierocles also says that an account of the πρωτον oikeion is an appropriate starting-point for a treatise on ethics (El. Eth., col. 11, 34–7). This appears to mean not that a treatise on ethics should begin with some remarks on developmental psychology but that an understanding of the earliest, natural object of motivation should constrain an ethical account in substantive ways, informing our conception of the human good. If the Stoics do not regard the object of neonatal motivation as correlative to the rational case, it is hard to understand the extent to which they were prepared to argue for a highly specific account of animal psychology in ethical contexts. For the suggestion that the Stoic theory is a response to Epicurean cradle arguments see Pohlenz, Grundfragen, 44–5; Die Stoa, 118–19. On the Carneadean arguments in Alexander’s Mantissa see G. Striker, ‘Antipater, or the Art of Living’, in ead., Essays, 298–315 at 313–14; R. W. Sharples (trans.),
If animals and infants are characterized from birth by an impulse to preserve their governing faculty, and if the satisfaction of this impulse is a sufficient condition of their teleological success, this analysis would appear to support the Stoics' claim, in the realm of ethics, that virtue is sufficient for happiness.

A standard way of understanding Stoic teleology, however, rather assumes that the Stoics regard external objectives—the *prima secundum naturam/prōta kata phusin* that figure prominently in sources associated with Carneades—as essential to the end of non-rational animals, so that the human end differs, in this fundamental respect, from that of lower animals. This picture is strongly implied by Cicero’s account of οἰκείοσις in *De finibus* 3, which represents human motivation as shifting in the course of development from a concern with external objectives to a singular concern with right action:

> A human being’s earliest concern is for what is in accordance with nature. But as soon as one has gained some understanding, or rather ‘conception’ (what the Stoics call *ennoia*), and sees an order and as it were concordance in the things which one ought to do, one then values [*aestimavit*] that concordance much more highly than those first objects of affection. (*Fin.* 3. 21 = LS 59D = *SVF* iii. 188, trans. Woolf)

Cicero’s language in this passage is striking inasmuch as it suggests that the Stoics, of all people, endorse a motivational shift away from what is seen to accord with nature at the earliest stages of development. The starkness of this motivational change is then reinforced with an analogy: though we begin, like other animals, with an attachment to objectives conducive to our physical flourishing, these introduce us in turn to the exercise of wisdom, which we eventually come to esteem more highly, as though we had been introduced to a second, more congenial friend (*Fin.* 3. 23 = *SVF* iii. 186). The οἰκείοσις account of *De finibus* 3 thus describes and underscores a basic discontinuity between the objects of non-rational impulse and the aims of fully rational motivation.

It is easy to conclude from Cicero’s account that the Stoics accept this motivational picture, and therefore that they suppose that

---


94 Cf. also *Fin.* 4. 41.
teleological success in non-rational animals depends on external conditions that, by the Stoics’ own lights, make no difference to the happiness of rational human agents. This implication—present but not quite stated in *De finibus* 3—is in fact made explicit in *De finibus* 4, where Cicero argues that teleological success requires the actual possession of external objectives:

How and where did you suddenly abandon the body and all those things that are in accordance with nature but not in our power, finally discarding appropriate action itself? How is it that so many of the things originally commended by nature are suddenly forsaken by wisdom? Even if we were seeking the supreme good not of a human being but of some living creature who had nothing but a mind, . . . this mind would not accept the end you are proposing. It would want health and freedom from pain, and would also desire its own preservation as well as the security of those goods I just mentioned. It would establish as its end a life in accordance with nature, and this means, as I said, possession [habere] of things that are in accordance with nature, either all of them or as many as possible of the most important. (*Fin.* 4. 26–7 = LS 64K, trans. Woolf, emphasis added)

As Cicero here represents the Stoic view, the earliest objects of motivation are ‘forsaken by wisdom’ in human beings, so that the content of the human end fails to correspond to the objects of impulse in animals and human infants. The change in motivation that follows the development of reason brings with it a radical restructuring of the end itself, a corresponding shift in the basic criteria of teleological success and an abandonment of objectives that are essential to the end of every other kind of organism.

Since Pohlenz, commentators have taken from Cicero’s account a crucial assumption about the kind-relative nature of the teleology that underlies the Stoic theory: they have assumed, in particular, that in addition to fixing the range of activities appropriate to an organism, the character of an organism’s constitution determines whether the performance of these activities is itself a sufficient condition of teleological success. On this assumption about the kind-

---

96 See Pohlenz, *Grundfragen*, 44–5; *Die Stoa*, 118–19. Pembroke writes that when the notion of goodness is formed by human beings ‘the whole range of natural things which led up to it is not merely downgraded to a position of secondary importance but ceases to matter at all’ (‘*Oikeiōsis*’, 206). According to Brennan, ‘It makes sense that food, health, and so on are essential to maintaining the constitution of an animal, but a rational being is constituted by reason, and its impulses ought to be directed towards the maintenance of that reason, by acting rationally, that is, virtuously. I
relative character of ends, the non-rational constitution of lower animals is supposed to explain why their telos depends on external conditions and objectives that sustain their physical life as organisms. By contrast, the fact that human beings possess a rational constitution, belonging to the highest division of kinds marked out by Diogenes, is supposed to explain why external conditions are indifferent to the human good and why the end for human beings consists wholly in virtue, a condition of the rational human hēgemonikon. We might call this the first-order interpretation of Stoic teleology in that it assumes that the end of non-rational animals depends on the satisfaction of their first-order impulses and, accordingly, on the presence of favourable external circumstances. On this account, the conditions of teleological success in non-rational animals are sharply discontinuous with those of rational human beings. Whereas the human telos depends on virtue alone, the telos of non-rational animals will depend, at least in part, on favourable external circumstances.

Apart from Cicero, however, no source requires us to adopt this view, and there are indications that a different teleological scheme lies behind the oikeiōsis account as Chrysippus developed it. What Diogenes’ report emphasizes, in fact, is a stricter parallel that holds across all three of the natural kinds he distinguishes. Though they differ with respect to the character and complexity of their hēgemonikon, Diogenes emphasizes that plants, animals, and humans alike conform to nature just in case they are correctly administered by this faculty. In particular, Diogenes does not identify the natural life for animals with achieving a set of external conditions, but rather with their appropriate administration via the mechanism of impulse: that is, with the condition in which their actions are correctly governed and co-ordinated by representations and impulses originating in their leading faculty, which is continuous with the

come to see my reason as the thing that is my own or oikeion to me, the thing whose welfare is my primary concern, such that if my reason is in good shape then I am in good shape. My final end, my summum bonum, is determined by the kind of thing I am’ (The Stoic Life, 156; cf. ‘Souls’, 396–9). According to Radice, Cicero’s account suggests that the development of reason in human beings ‘modifica profondamente il fine’ (Oikeiosis, 206). The Stoics suppose that ‘la nascita della ragione crea una frattura netta all’interno della natura umana sicché l’autoconservazione può essere solo della ragione’ (206).

pneuma that structures the physical cosmos. Though animals go looking for what is appropriate and avoid what is not, nothing in the passage suggests that Chrysippus held that an animal’s telos depends on anything more than the integrity of its hegemonikon and the appropriate modes of action this secures. Though the hegemonikon is the faculty by which an animal governs its own motions, it is also the faculty by which cosmic reason governs it. The resulting picture is that of pneuma working in and through each kind of thing, establishing it as the kind of thing it is and bringing about the activities appropriate to it, moving it towards what is oikeion and away from what is allotrian. Such an account fits suggestively with Sextus’ remark that the Stoics believe it can be shown, on the basis of animal behaviour, that only the fine is good (M. 11. 99–100 = SVF iii. 38).

We might suppose, then, that in older Stoic theory something analogous to the sufficiency of virtue for human beings applies at every level of the scala naturae, so that the end of each kind of organism is achieved through the preservation of its hegemonikon. There are, to be sure, significant differences between non-rational animals and rational human beings in Stoic theory: the sophistication of their concepts, the capacity for language, and the mechanism of assent being the most salient examples. These differences determine, for the Stoics, a set of evaluative categories that apply to rational agents alone, including especially those of happiness, goodness, and justice. A central reason why they do so, however, is that the conceptual sophistication of rational cognition enables human beings to mirror in the structure of their own cognitions—as animals cannot—the order and beauty instantiated in the cosmos itself. The capacity for assent that accompanies this conceptual sophistication moreover allows human beings to be artificers of this order, together with Zeus, by apprehending and assenting to it. These

98 As Inwood observes, there is no evidence ‘that the early Stoics said that an animal is ever oriented to anything but its constitution’ (Ethics and Human Action, 219). Stoic sources sometimes speak of external objectives as oikeia, but this is presumably because an animal’s awareness of and dominant impulse to preserve its ssyntasis—the prwton oikeion or primary object of oikeiwsis—determines a range of first-order affiliations and impulses towards what is appropriate (oikeiow) in a derivative sense (Inwood, Ethics and Human Action, 104–5). Cf. nn. 103 and 105 below.

99 On this point see esp. Epict. Diss. 1. 6. 18–22 and 2. 8. According to Epictetus, the fundamental difference between humans and non-rational animals is not the capacity to use impressions correctly but the capacity to understand this use. Epictetus says, very strikingly, that if animals understood their own use of impressions the cat-
differences all depend on complexities internal to the human *hēgemonikon*, however, and there is little reason to suppose that they are intended to account for basic differences in the criteria of teleological success that apply across species. It is consistent with our sources to suppose that what is transformed by the development of reason, according to Stoic theory, is not the actual value of external circumstances nor the actual conditions of teleological success. It is rather the capacity to appreciate and assent to patterns of action already present in the rationally organized cosmos.

This way of understanding Stoic teleology assumes that although the range of activities appropriate to an animal (*kathēkonta*) will vary with its constitution, the preservation of its constitution remains, for each kind of organism, sufficient to achieve its end. On this interpretation, when Epictetus asserts that the works and ends for each animal are relative to its constitution (*kataskeuē*), he does not mean that the basic conditions of teleological success vary widely across species. He means only that the activities in which an organism’s end consists are determined by the set of functional capacities it possesses by nature: on whether, for instance, it was designed by nature for co-operation with other members of its own kind, as human agents manifestly are (Cic. *Fin.* 3. 63–4 = LS 57F; *Off.* 1. 12; *Leg.* 1. 27; cf. Xen. *Mem.* 1. 4. 12). Under this construal, the telos of a non-rational animal no more depends on external conditions than does the human telos. It rather consists in the integrity of the animal’s *hēgemonikon* and in the performance of appropriate functions (*kathēkonta*), which the animal’s capacity for self-perception enables it to grasp. We might call this the higher-order interpretation of Stoic teleology: it implies that although the range of activities appropriate to an organism may vary from case to case, the telos depends, for each kind of organism, on the satisfaction of its higher-order impulse to preserve the constitution given to it by nature.


100 Pembroke writes that there is ‘a definite emphasis [in Stoic texts] on the continuity of childhood with maturity, just as there is elsewhere on that of animal behaviour with human life . . . [T]he line drawn is evaluative rather than descriptive, and ultimately, the continuity is more important than the point of demarcation’ (‘*Oikeiōsis*’, 121).
Each of these interpretations of Stoic teleology has a significant consequence for our understanding of Stoic theory and of the oikeiōsis account in particular. The first-order construal of Stoic teleology may seem to spoil the inductive character of Stoic appeals to animal behaviour, as Cicero points out when he speaks for Antiochus. If Cicero’s report in De finibus 4 is correct, the older Stoics must have acknowledged that rational human maturity is marked by an abandonment of objectives that, by the Stoics’ own admission, matter to the telos of non-rational creatures (and perhaps that of pre-rational humans). When a human being acquires her rational nature, she acquires an end that excludes as indifferent resources and conditions essential to the telos of all other animals (Fin. 4. 28).

If the Stoics were prepared to grant the strongly discontinuous account of animal and human ends implied by De finibus 4, their appeal to animal behaviour seems wrong-headed from the start. On this account of Stoic teleology, it is difficult to understand why Stoic arguments for the human good place so much emphasis on the animal case and why Hierocles and Seneca take such pains to refute rival analyses of animal behaviour.

The higher-order construal of Stoic teleology has a consequence of another sort: it requires us to suppose that, at least when he is speaking for Antiochus, Cicero is sometimes prepared to distort or conceal older Stoic views in substantive ways. If the Chrysippian theory of oikeiōsis identified the aim of an animal’s basic motivational impulse with the regulation of appropriate activity rather than the satisfaction of its physical needs, then Cicero’s report in De finibus 4 significantly mischaracterizes the psychological claims that are the starting-point of the oikeiōsis theory, replacing the Stoics’ own analysis of non-rational motivation with an account that points to Antiochean conclusions about the human telos. Since Cicero offers us one of our few windows into Stoic theory, this means we must treat a substantial portion of our evidence as a misleading guide to this aspect of older Stoicism. This is a disheartening result.

On balance, however, I believe we should accept the higher-order framework suggested by Diogenes’ account, for three reasons. First, there are indications, internal to De finibus, that the asymmetry between animal and human ends insinuated by Antiochus is a vestige of dialectical exchanges between the Stoics and the Academy rather than a feature of older Stoic theory. As Inwood

---

101 Cicero understood the doctrinal core of Stoic theory very well, but he is cap-
has emphasized, the sharp division between soul and body foregrounded throughout book 4 of *De finibus* suggests that Cicero is operating with a broadly Academic account of the soul–body relation in view and that he may simply be ignoring, at this stage in his dialectical argument, the different physical analysis that underpins the Stoics’ own account. The psychological starting-points of the Stoic theory as Cicero represents them in *De finibus* 3 are not especially clear, but they are clear enough to register an important point of difference between the Stoic theory and the Antiochean versions of *De finibus* 4 and 5. In *De finibus* 3 Cato says clearly that an animal’s primary attachment is to its own constitution (‘ad suum statum’) and that it is in virtue of perceiving and caring for its constitution that an animal possesses impulses towards what is external. By contrast, though Piso also speaks of the motive of

able of neglecting or distorting the older Stoic account in substantive philosophical ways. An adequate defence of this claim would require a book, but three salient examples may help to substantiate it. (1) Susanne Bobzien has shown how Cicero’s examples of co-fated events (*Fat.* 30) spoil the logic of Chrysippus’ response to the Idle Argument when they are substituted for Chrysippus’ own illustrations, and this is in a context in which Cicero apparently aims to be charitable to Chrysippus. See Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford, 2001), 198–217 and esp. 216–17. (2) At *Tusc.* 4. 10–11 Cicero frames the Stoic theory of πάθη by reference to a Platonic account of psychic partition, a highly misleading association given the psychic monism of orthodox Stoicism. As Margaret Graver notes, the association ‘gives Cicero a rhetorical advantage’ but ‘threatens the integrity of the account’. See Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions* (Chicago, 2002), 135, and cf. Inwood, ‘Walking and Talking’, 76–7. (3) At *Fin.* 4. 14–15 (=*SVF* iii. 13) Cicero presents a polemical Carneadean caricature of the Stoic τέλος—that the end is to live enjoying the objects that accord with nature—as though it were an interpretation of the τέλος the Stoics themselves accept. But this formulation is very far from the orthodox Stoic view, as Cicero is well aware. Cf. Cic. *Acad.* 2. 131 (=*SVF* i. 181); *Tusc.* 5. 84–5; *Fin.* 4. 15; 5. 20 (=*LS* 6.4G=*SVF* iii. 44). See further R. Woolf (trans.), *Cicero: On Moral Ends* (Cambridge, 2001), 95–6 n. 15.


103 Though this important difference is not sufficient, in my view, to show that the account of *De finibus* 3 is free of Academic distortions. Cicero is there operating in a dialectical context that is intended to prepare the reader for a critique of Stoicism, and his account of self-perception and self-appropriation at 3. 16 is poorly connected to his characterization of the things first recommended to us by nature, whose abandonment is then described at 3. 21 and heavily emphasized in book 4. As Schmitz observes, Cicero’s brief mention of self-perception ‘spielt . . . in der folgenden Erörterung keine Rolle mehr’ (*Cato*, 26). Most puzzling of all, perhaps, is the material at 3. 17–18 (=*SVF* iii. 189). Cicero there treats true representational states of the ἄγεμολοι, cognitiones (καταλήψεις) and artes (τέχναι)—which Stobaeus classifies as goods—as objects of our basic motivational affinities and things to be taken for
The Stoic Argument from oikeiōsis

self-preservation, this motivation is not analysed in cognitive terms or with explicit reference to the hēgemonikon of the organism, as it is in the Stoic scheme. It is rather analysed with reference to an organism’s nature as a whole and to the physical needs that answer to this nature, holistically conceived.  

On Cato’s account, an animal pursues what is external because it first perceives and is appropriated to its leading faculty and the functions this implies. On Piso’s account, an animal pursues external objectives because it is immediately appropriated to them: its self-awareness follows rather than precedes its impulse towards what is external (Fin. 5. 24).

When Piso accuses the Stoics of abandoning the things recommended by nature, therefore, he appears not to be working with the Stoics’ own technical account of the prōton oikeion as hēgemonikon but instead assuming an account according to which animal impulse is straightforwardly directed at external objectives such as food or safety, without the prior phenomena of self-perception and self-appropriation. Such an analysis corresponds closely to the formulation of the end Carneades is said to have defended against the Stoics and which Cicero himself occasionally and misleadingly represents as the Stoic view: that ‘the highest good is to enjoy the primary objects nature has recommended’ (Acad. 2. 131, trans. Brittain).

A second consideration is this: Galen preserves a fragment of their own sake. This material sounds very Stoic indeed, and it fits well with Sextus’ observation that the Stoics locate the goods of the soul in the ἡγεμονικόν itself (M. 7. 235–6). It fits poorly, however, with the emphasis on primary natural things in which it is embedded. We may suppose that, for the Stoics, καταλήψεις are indeed objects of the primary oikeiosis relation in fully rational human agents, since they are physical states of the ἡγεμονικόν (cf. Cic. Acad. 2. 31 = LS 40N) and components of virtue. Externals, though pursued by animals and human agent alike, are pursued derivatively, as constituents of the καθήκοντα that flow from the ἡγεμονικόν (cf. n. 98 above). More generally, the cosmic framework so evident in Diogenes Laertius has all but disappeared from Cicero’s version of the Stoic theory (cf. Inwood, Ethics after Aristotle, 63–4; Radice, Oikeiosis, 186). For disconcerting parallels between Cicero’s De finibus 3 account and Peripatetic versions of oikeiosis see Schmitz, Cato, 16–38.

104 ‘[T]he object of every living creature’s desire . . . is to be found in what is adapted to its nature’ (Fin. 5. 24, trans. Woolf).

105 Structured as it is by the Carneadia divisio, Piso’s account of the Stoic position does not even acknowledge an organism’s constitution as a possible object of initial impulse. It is notably and deliberately omitted from the possible starting-points acknowledged by the divisio, and hence from the list of plausible accounts of the good. At Fin. 5. 18 pleasure, the absence of pain, and the primary natural things are given as the only possible objects of an animal’s primary or initial desire. The account preserved at D.L. 7. 85 (= LS 75A = SVF iii. 178) is not even recognized in this scheme.

106 Cf. Cic. Tusc. 5. 84–5; Fin. 4. 15, 60; 5. 20 (= LS 64G).
Posidonius attributing to Chrysippus the view that we have by nature an ‘oikieōsis relationship to the fine alone’ (fr. 169=PHP 5. 5. 8=LS 65M). This claim, if Chrysippus made it, is filtered through Posidonius’ Platonizing account of the human soul and Galen’s own polemical commentary, but it fits well with the supposition that the primary object of appropriation, for animals and humans alike, is the hēgemonikon itself. Sources closely associated with Chrysippus regularly align the predicate oikeion with the condition of virtue and with the activities that flow from a constitution that conforms to nature. By contrast, the focus of the Carneadean account is not on appropriate activities but on the external objectives or fruits of nature that answer to the Carneadean conception of the end. The interpretation I have proposed makes sense of this evidence. If the Stoics identify the prōton oikeion with the faculty that controls perception and impulse, and if the aim of the primary impulse is to preserve this faculty as nature intends, the primary oikēiosis relationship will indeed be directed, in the case of the sage, at what is fine, at the perfected rational hēgemonikon and the activities to which it gives rise. This means, in turn, that the primary object of oikeiōsis will be correlative to the Stoic conception of the telos, according to which happiness consists in virtue and virtuous activity. On this account, the Stoic argument fits the broader pattern of Hellenistic appeals to neonatal motivation.

The third and most compelling reason, however, is that the higher-order construal of Stoic teleology supplies the Stoics with an argument for the human good that is intelligible against the background of the cosmological theory developed by Chrysippus. In general Stoic teleology appears to be carefully calibrated to accommodate the Stoics’ cosmobiology and the interlocking relation of part to whole. Nature as a whole realizes its purpose even when the parts do not. But the parts too realize their ends when there is no impediment to the governing faculty through which nature works (Cic. ND 2. 35; Tusc. 5. 37–8; Marc. Aur.

107 Compare, for instance, the use of oikeiov Plutarch ascribes to Chrysippus at Stoic. repugn. 1038 b (=LS 57E=SVF iii. 179) and 1038 f (=SVF iii. 211) with D.L. 7. 108 (=SVF i. 230, iii. 495) and Marcus Aurelius’ use of oikeiov at Med. 11. 13. In these passages virtue and its activities—not external objects—are said to be oikeiov. Cf. also Stob. 2. 69 (=SVF iii. 86); S.E. M. 7. 12 (=SVF i. 356); Epict. Diss. 3. 24. 67–9; and especially Galen, PHP 5. 5. 8–20 (Posid. fr. 169=LS 65M).

108 On the wide influence of the Carneadean critique see Inwood, Ethics after Aristotle, ch. 3.
The Stoic Argument from oikeiōsis

The Stoic Argument from oikeiōsis

Med. 8. 41; cf. Nemesius, Nat. hom. 35. 258=SVF ii. 991). The account I have proposed attributes to the Stoics the view that the same conditions of teleological success obtain at every level of the scala naturae, and it therefore explains the dialectical point of Stoic appeals to animal self-perception and self-appropriation. Every organism goes through the motions of fate, but it may do so either as a segment of pneuma whose representations and impulses are preserved in a condition of conformity to nature or as one in which they are not. It appears that Chrysippus is largely responsible for the role assigned to pneuma as a basic postulate of this account. The evidence suggests that he took pains to a remarkable degree to integrate Stoic cosmogony and cosmology with new developments in the vitalist medical theories of the third century. In Chrysippus’ hands, the theory of pneuma provided a unifying basis for Stoic cosmology and biology, allowing the Stoics to characterize the motions (kinēseis) of individual organisms both as movements of distinct souls and as movements of the breath that suffuses and sustains the cosmos as a whole (e.g. Epict. Diss. 1. 14. 6–7).

7. The Stoic argument from oikeiōsis

If this cosmological background provided the context for a Chrysippean theory of oikeiōsis, the many puzzling examples of animal self-perception and self-preservation can be understood as part of a unified teleological analysis. Such a framework yields an argument that is structurally parallel to what is known of the Epicurean ‘cradle argument’ and of the developmental account associated with Antiochus. It moves, that is to say, from the teleological success conditions of non-rational animals to conclusions

about the human good. Since accurate perception and appropriate impulse do not depend on circumstances, the Stoic account implies that it is possible for each creature to act appropriately regardless of external conditions, as Seneca’s turtle does when it struggles to right itself (Ep. 121. 8=LS 57B). This element of the Stoics’ account supports the claim that the human good consists in virtue alone. At the same time, the Stoics argue that animal behaviour cannot be explained by the external stimulus of pleasure. Animals perform the functions appropriate to their make-up even when it is painful for them to do so, and this behaviour can be explained only by the mechanisms of self-perception and self-appropriation (Sen. Ep. 121. 7–8=LS 57B; S.E. M. 11. 99–100). This element of the Stoics’ account supports the claim that virtue consists in a form of cognition, a grasp of oneself and of the cosmos as a whole.

Such an interpretation fits closely with the fact that the category of appropriate (kathēkon) activity applies to organisms quite generally and with the metaphysical claim that an organism’s hēgemonikon is the most immediate expression of divine activity in the physical cosmos, directing its activities in a manner suited to its kind. An animal of course does not recognize the conditions under which its own end is achieved, as rational humans may. Yet the patterns apparent in animal activity evidently provide a model, within the Stoic scheme, of the psychological coherence and consistency that is supposed to govern human cognition and action. It is hard to credit Cicero’s implication, advanced in a polemical context, that the Stoics treat the conditions of teleological success for human agents as sharply discontinuous with those that apply elsewhere in the scala naturae. In particular, it is difficult to believe that the Stoics treat external conditions indifferent to human happiness as essential to the telos of non-rational animals, regarding an animal’s failures to realize these external conditions as teleological failures.

If this reconstruction is correct, it has two consequences for

110 Contrast Galen, PHP 5. 5. 3–7.
111 Seneca especially compares the form of cognition implanted in animals by nature to the technical knowledge that constitutes virtue in the human case (Ep. 121. 21–4), on which see Inwood, Seneca, 343–6; Origen, Princ. 3. 1. 2–3 (LS 53A=SVF ii. 988).
112 This is not to suggest that non-rational animals conceive of external things as indifferent or pursue them under this description, on the Stoic account, merely that external things make no more difference to the τέλος of animals than to the human τέλος, in the Stoics’ view. The Stoics do emphasize, however, that animals and infants perform the functions appropriate to them with a certain disregard for painful
understanding the Stoic doctrine of oikeiōsis. First, it helps to explain why the Stoics do not appear to offer a derivation of the sort commentators have sought of other-regarding obligations from an animal’s appropriation to self. Though self-appropriation gives rise to behaviours associated with self-preservation in the ordinary sense, it also explains a broader range of teleologically appropriate activities. These include, most saliently, an animal’s care and concern for its own offspring and, in some cases, its co-operation with other animals both within and across species. In the human case, the leading feature of the rational constitution is its suitability for social co-operation, evidenced most clearly in the capacity for language. According to Cicero and Marcus, we are constituted (constitutum esse/kateskeuasthai) for justice and fellowship, and recognition of this fact grounds our awareness of obligations towards others (Cic. Leg. 1. 28=SVF iii. 343; Marc. Aur. Med. 2. 1; 5. 16; 5. 30; 11. 21). Though the impulse to preserve one’s own constitution is, strictly speaking, a self-directed one, it is doubtful that the Stoics ever treated it as co-ordinate with the first-order impulses associated with so-called social oikeiōsis or as one that could enter into conflict with them. The sources do not support a tidy association of social oikeiōsis with the presence of reason, nor do they restrict the primary impulse to self-preservation to non-rational animals. Self- and other-regarding forms of motivation cut across the distinction between rational and non-rational agency. Both are rooted in the mechanisms of self-perception and self-appropriation that ground the full range of activities appropriate to animate organisms.

Second, this analysis brings out a basic respect in which the Stoic account of animal psychology is supposed to be normative for the rational case. In rational agents the character of impulse is conditioned by the discursive and inferential abilities that underwrite higher-order modes of phantasia and, crucially, by the capacity to pass judgement on phantasias the soul consciously entertains. These or pleasurable results (Sen. Ep. 121. 8=LS 57B; S.E. M. 11. 99–100=SVF iii. 38). Cf. Goldschmidt, Système stoïcien, 128–9.

113 Cf. Plut. De amore 495ε: ‘But in man, whom she made a rational and political being, inclining him to justice, law, religion, building of cities, and friendship, [Nature] has placed the seeds of those things that are excellent, beautiful, and fruitful—that is, the love of their children—following the first principles which entered into the very constitution of their bodies [τῶν σωμάτων κατασκευαίς]’ (trans. after Brown).
cognitive capacities are constitutive of the rational faculty that is a privileged expression of divine reason, in the Stoics’ view, but they also bring with them increased scope for representational error, with the result that rational agents are liable to stray from nature in ways non-rational animals do not. Nothing is more contrary to nature than a false assent, Cicero maintains, in that it deforms both the cognitions of the soul and the impulses to which they give rise (Fin. 3. 18 = SVF iii. 189). There is a suggestion in several texts that in respect of representational accuracy, if not conceptual refinement, the pneuma of an animal’s soul adheres more reliably and consistently than that of human agents to the contours of the world.\footnote{See esp. Stob. 4. 502 (quoted above); 2. 85. 13 (= LS 59B = SVF iii. 494); Cic. Tusc. 5. 38; cf. also Plut. De amore 493 c–e.}

This point helps to explain why the Stoics regard the precisely consistent activities of non-rational animals—performed on the basis of factive and largely automatic representations—as a structural model of the cognitive conformity to nature that is supposed to obtain in human beings.\footnote{According to Goldschmidt, ‘Au sens le plus général du mot, le devoir (καθήκον) est le “convenable”, ce qui est en accord avec la nature de l’agent. Cette conformité s’établit spontanément, comme une conséquence (ἀκόλουθον) naturelle, dans le comportement de l’animal; elle existe même chez l’homme, au niveau de la tendance (ήρμη). Plus tard, lors du développement de la nature spécifique de l’homme (la raison) cette convenance ne se fait plus spontanément, mais résulte d’un choix réfléchi . . . on a vu que le devoir chez l’animal est parfait d’emblée’ (Système stoïcien, 125–6).}

Such a reconstruction is consonant with the prominent place given to the oikeiōsis doctrine in even cursory allusions to Stoic ethical theory, and it supplies the Stoics with the sort of ethical foundation they need: one that makes the end for each creature consist in the functions appropriate to it in virtue of the kind of creature it is. Under this interpretation, the Stoics are no longer saddled with the burden of explaining how narrowly egoistic motivation is supplanted in human beings by rational motivation of a fundamentally different character. Instead, they are building an inductive case for an analysis of teleological functioning that applies throughout the scala naturae. With this account in view, we can see how Stoic appeals to oikeiōsis might have figured in a defence of justice, as Porphyry and the anonymous commentator on the Theaetetus affirm, and as passages in Marcus Aurelius and Cicero independently suggest.

What is most striking about the Stoic theory, perhaps, is the...
degree to which the Stoics are prepared to integrate psychological principles within a cosmic framework and interpret their significance in cosmic terms. As Pembroke observes, discussions of oikeiōsis have tended ‘to isolate Stoic ethics from other aspects of their thinking, but Nature is not a specifically ethical term’. That the oikeiōsis doctrine is embedded in this way within a cosmic teleological scheme is in keeping with the Stoics’ Socratic inheritance through Xenophon, Plato, and Antisthenes. Antecedents to Stoic conclusions about animal psychology appear in the Cyropaedia, and it is known from the reports of Sextus and Diogenes that Zeno adopted teleological arguments found in the Memorabilia (Xen. Cyr. 2. 3. 9; Mem. 1. 4. 3–18; S.E. M. 9. 101–4; D.L. 7. 1–2 = SVF i. 1; cf. Cic. ND 2. 18; 3. 27). ‘I beg you to learn from Chrysippus’, says Epictetus, ‘what is the administration [dioikēsis] of the universe, and what place therein the rational animal has’ (Diss. 1. 10. 10, trans. Oldfather). On the interpretation I have offered, Chrysippus argued that the administration of the cosmos is such that the end for each creature consists in the performance of the activities assigned to it and in the preservation of the governing faculty from which they flow.

Colgate University

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Bees, R., Die Oikeiosislehre der Stoa: Rekonstruktion ihres Inhaltes (Würzburg, 2004).


Dirlmeier, F., *Die Oikeiosislehre Theophrasts (=Philologus, suppl. 30.1; Leipzig, 1937).*


Graver, M., Cicero on the Emotions (Chicago, 2002).


Hahm, D., The Origins of Stoic Cosmology (Columbus, Ohio, 1977).


Lee, C.-U., Oikeiosis: Stoische Ethik in naturphilosophischer Perspektive (Freiburg i.Br. and Munich, 2002).


Pohlenz, M., Die Stoa (Göttingen, 1948).


Ramelli, I., Hierocles the Stoic: Elements of Ethics [Hierocles], trans. D. Konstan (Atlanta, 2009).


Von Arnim, H., Arius Didymus’ Abriß der peripatetischen Ethik (Vienna, 1926).
ALEXANDER AGAINST GALEN ON MOTION: A MERE LOGICAL DEBATE?

ORNÁ HARÁRI

1. The debate between Alexander and Galen

SINCE Shlomo Pines’s pioneering study of Alexander of Aphrodisias’ *Refutation of Galen*, the understanding of this treatise has significantly changed.¹ Whereas Pines held that here Alexander attempts to defend Aristotle against Galen’s rejection of the thesis that anything that moves is moved by something, the prevailing view is that these thinkers debated only the logical validity of the argument that Aristotle presents in *Physics* 7. 1 for this thesis.² Admittedly, the

¹ This treatise is extant in an Arabic translation that has come down to us in two partially overlapping manuscripts, Carullah 1279 and Escorial 798. These manuscripts are respectively entitled *The Treatise of Alexander of Aphrodisias Answering Galen’s Attack on Aristotle’s View that Everything that Moves is Moved by Something* and *Alexander’s Treatise in Reply to Galen concerning the First Mover*. For brevity, I use here the title *Refutation of Galen*. It is not clear whether this work is a part of Alexander’s lost commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics* or an independent treatise. For the former view see S. Pines, ‘*Omne quod movetur necesse est ab aliquo moveri*: A Refutation of Galen by Alexander of Aphrodisias and the ‘Theory of Motion’ [‘*Omne quod movetur*’], *Isis*, 52 (1961), 21–54 at 22; for the latter view see N. Rescher and M. E. Marmura (ed., trans., comm.), *The Refutation by Alexander of Aphrodisias of Galen’s Treatise on the Theory of Motion* [*Refutation by Alexander*] (Islamabad, 1971), 60–2.

Refutation of Galen is dedicated to a presentation and refutation of Galen’s claim that Aristotle’s argument in *Physics* 7. 1 is invalid, but it is not obvious that the treatise is restricted to this logical point. As Pines pointed out, Alexander reports here that Galen based his criticism on substantive assumptions which suggest that in Galen’s view certain things are not moved by something. In spite of Pines’s observation, no one has examined in detail how these assumptions are related to Galen’s criticism of Aristotle’s argument. The following study is devoted to an examination of this question.

In *Physics* 7. 1 Aristotle presents the following argument in support of the thesis that things that have an internal source of motion are also moved by something (241\textsuperscript{b}44–242\textsuperscript{a}49):

Next, a thing that is not moved by something does not necessarily cease moving because something else is at rest, but if something comes to rest because something else ceases moving, it is necessarily moved by something. If this is granted, everything that moves is moved by something, since AB, which has been assumed to be in motion, is necessarily divisible, as everything that moves is divisible. Now, let it be divided at C. Then if CB is not in motion, AB will not move. For if it is going to move, it is clear that AC would move while CB is at rest and consequently [AB] will not move in itself and primarily. However, it was assumed that it moves in itself and primarily. Therefore, necessarily, if CB is not in motion, AB is at rest. And it was agreed that that which is at rest when something is not in motion is moved by something. Consequently, everything that is moved is moved by something; for that which is in motion is always divisible, and if its part is not in motion, the whole too is necessarily at rest.\textsuperscript{4}

This argument has two parts. In the first Aristotle assumes that anything that moves by something comes to rest when something else ceases moving, and in the second he argues that this assumption holds for anything that moves. The second part opens with a preparatory stage where Aristotle assumes that anything that moves

---

\textsuperscript{3} Pines had no access to the Escorial manuscript, where Galen’s criticism is presented. The proponents of the current view do not entirely disregard Galen’s theoretical commitments: Silvia Fazzo admits that Galen’s criticism derives from his understanding of the expression ‘moving primarily and in itself’ (‘Alexandre d’Aphrodise contre Galien’, 137–8) but nevertheless views his criticism as purely logical. Michael Frede notes that Galen is described in this treatise as an adherent of Plato (‘Galen’s Theology’, 83) but does not examine the implications of this evidence for his understanding of the scope of Galen’s criticism.

\textsuperscript{4} All translations from Greek are mine.
is divisible;\(^5\) posits a magnitude \(AB\) and divides it at \(C\) into the parts \(AC\) and \(CB\); and presents the thesis that he proves by \textit{reductio ad impossibile} in the next stage: \(^6\) ‘if the part \(CB\) does not move the whole \(AB\) does not move’. This argument is based on another assumption that Aristotle presents earlier in \textit{Physics} 7. 1 and in \textit{Physics} 5. 1 (224\(^a\)18–34), ‘\(AB\) moves in itself \([\kappa\alpha\theta’ \ α’υτό]\) and not because one of its parts is in motion \([\mu’\tau’ \ τ’ων] \tau’ουτον \tau’ι \ kυνεί’sθαι\)’ (241\(^b\)38). From this assumption Aristotle infers that if a part of \(AB\) is at rest \(AB\) does not move, for if it moves, it does so when \(AC\) is in motion and \(CB\) is at rest, but this conclusion is in conflict with the assumption that \(AB\) moves in itself and primarily \([\kappa\alpha\theta’ \ α’υτό κα’ι \ πρ’όσθον]\). \(^7\) This inference leads to the conclusion that \(AB\) is moved by something, since in accordance with Aristotle’s initial assumption it ceases moving when something (i.e. its part \(CB\)) comes to rest. At the final stage, Aristotle generalizes this conclusion, arguing that anything that moves

\(^{5}\) Aristotle proves this assumption at \textit{Phys.} 6. 10, 246\(^b\)8–247\(^a\)6.

\(^{6}\) In the \textit{Refutation of Galen} Alexander reports that Galen interpreted this stage of Aristotle’s argument as a \textit{reductio ad absurdum} (64\(^b\)1–7 Escorial). Alexander rejects this interpretation (64\(^b\)5, 16; 65\(^a\)4 Escorial) because it may support Galen’s contention that the proposition ‘\(AC\) is in motion and \(CB\) is at rest’, which is the conclusion of the \textit{reductio} step, is impossible.

\(^{7}\) It is difficult to understand how Aristotle justifies this inference. In \textit{Physics} 5. 1 the distinction between things that move in themselves \((\kappa\alpha\theta’ \ α’υτό)\) and primarily \((\pi’ρ’όσθον)\) and things that move accidentally \((\kappa’ατά συμβεβηκός)\) and partially \((\kappa’ατά μέρη)\) implies that motion should be predicated of its proper subject, not of an accident or a part of the moving thing. For example, ‘walking’ should be predicated of man and not of the musical, but ‘playing the piano’ is predicated of the musical, not of man. Similarly, ‘convalescing’ is not predicated of the body when only the health of the eye or the thorax is restored, but ‘growing’ is predicated primarily of a thirteen-year-old boy, although his eyes no longer grow. Accordingly, this account does not entail that if a part does not move the whole does not move primarily and in itself. The abstract magnitude \(AB\) admits a similar account. If the parts \(AC\) and \(CB\) are distinguished but not spatially separated, nothing prevents the predicate ‘increasing in size’ from holding primarily and in itself for \(AB\), when the length of \(AC\) increases, while the size of \(CB\) remains the same. Aristotle’s inference may hold for locomotion of abstract magnitudes or homoeomerous bodies. When \(AC\) moves and \(CB\) is at rest, the whole moves by virtue of its part because in this case \(AC\) pushes or drags \(CB\). This suggestion may explain why Aristotle uses this inference in arguing that \(AB\) is moved by something. However, Aristotle does not restrict his argument to locomotion of abstract magnitudes or homoeomerous bodies. In view of these considerations, it is difficult to see how Aristotle justifies the inference from the assumption that \(CB\) is at rest to the conclusion that \(AB\) does not move primarily and in itself. This inference exposes Aristotle’s argument to Galen’s criticism. It implies that any whole does not moves primarily and in itself when one of its parts is at rest, thereby giving rise to the contention that the assumption that \(CB\) is at rest is incompatible with the assumption that \(AB\) moves primarily and in itself.
is moved by something because anything that moves is divisible and by the above argument it comes to rest if its part is not in motion.\textsuperscript{8}

Galen’s criticism of this argument is concisely described in the following passage from Simplicius’ commentary on \textit{Physics} 7. 1:

The most scholarly [\textit{φιλολογώτατος}] Galen criticized this argument, and others criticize [it] too, on the grounds that it uses an impossible hypothesis that says that CB does not move, although AB moves primarily and in itself. (1039. 13–15 Diels)

This passage serves as the main evidence in support of the view that Galen’s criticism is confined to the validity of Aristotle’s argument.\textsuperscript{9} It suggests that Galen directly questions the assumption that a part of AB is at rest (henceforth the ‘resting part assumption’), but not the other assumptions or more importantly the thesis that Aristotle’s argument establishes. Simplicius does not present Galen’s argument in detail, but his brief description suggests that Galen argued that the resting part assumption is impossible because it contradicts the assumption that AB moves primarily and in itself. The \textit{Refutation of Galen} confirms this conclusion. Here Alexander reports that Galen holds that Aristotle’s argument yields no conclusion because it rests on a contradictory assumption (64\textsuperscript{a}1–5 Escorial) and that the resting part assumption amounts to the assumption that AB moves and does not move at the same time (63\textsuperscript{b}15–19, 63\textsuperscript{b}25, 64\textsuperscript{a}20–3 Escorial).

These considerations clearly show that Galen questioned the validity of Aristotle’s argument, but they do not entail the conclusion that his criticism is merely logical. The question whether the resting part assumption is contradictory cannot be determined on formal grounds alone but depends on the interpretation of characterization of AB as moving primarily and in itself. The \textit{Refutation of Galen} confirms this conclusion and also informs us that Galen did not base his argument on Aristotle’s definition of moving primarily and in

\textsuperscript{8} As David Ross points out, this argument is problematic because it implies that the whole’s motion is causally dependent on the part’s motion, whereas Aristotle’s assumptions entail that these motions are merely logically dependent (W. D. Ross, \textit{Aristotle’s Physics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary} (Oxford, 1936), 669, and R. Wardy, \textit{The Chain of Change: A Study of Aristotle’s Physics VII} (Cambridge, 1990), 96–9). The debate between Alexander and Galen does not turn on this problem but, as I show in sect. 3.1 below, Alexander indirectly addresses it through his claim that this argument does not seek to establish a causal relation between the motions of the whole and the part.

\textsuperscript{9} Fazzo, ‘Alexandre d’Aphrodise contre Galien’, 136.
itself but, as Alexander says several times, on the assumption that this expression means ‘having an inner source of motion and not being moved by any external thing’ (67ª30–1 Carullah; 62ª13–19, 62ª26–63ª1, 63ª5–7, 65ª12–14, 66ª24–5 Escorial).

Galen’s use of this definition of moving primarily and in itself casts doubt on the logical interpretation of his argument. On this interpretation, Galen does not achieve his principal aim; he attempts to challenge the validity of Aristotle’s argument but fails because he bases his criticism on his definition of moving primarily and in itself, and not on Aristotle’s. The logical interpretation is even more problematic, given that Galen could criticize the argument in Physics 7. 1 on the basis of Aristotle’s definition of moving primarily and in itself. Galen could argue, as others did in antiquity, that Aristotle begs the question. That is to say, he could contend that since Aristotle’s definition implies that a thing which moves in virtue of having a part that moves does not move primarily and in itself, the assumption that a part of a whole is at rest amounts to the assumption that the whole does not move primarily and in itself, and so Aristotle does not prove but assumes the conclusion that the whole does not move primarily and in itself (Simpl. In Phys. 1040. 9–12 Diels). In a similar vein, Galen could further argue that Aristotle’s definition is incompatible with the assumption that AB moves primarily and in itself. The latter assumption implies that AB moves as a whole and not in virtue of having a part that moves, whereas the resting part assumption states that one part of AB, i.e. CB, is at rest, hence these assumptions amount to the assumption that AB both moves and does not move primarily and in itself. In contrast, Galen’s definition of moving primarily and in itself as having an inner source of motion and not being moved by an external thing does not immediately imply that a thing that moves in this way cannot have one part in motion.

In his actual argument Galen makes the stronger claim that the resting part assumption is impossible. This conclusion does not follow from Aristotle’s definition of moving primarily and in itself because it does not imply that a thing that moves primarily and in itself cannot stop moving in this way. As I show below, Galen bases his argument on the assumption that the motion of things that move primarily and in themselves strongly depends on their substance or nature. By this assumption, the resting part assumption is impossible because things that move primarily and in themselves according to his definition cannot stop moving as long as they retain their substance or nature. For this reason, Galen’s argument leads to the conclusion that Aristotle’s argument rests on the contradictory assumption ‘AB both moves and does not move’, whereas the above argument from Aristotle’s definition of moving primarily and in itself leads to the qualified contradiction ‘AB both moves and does not move primarily and in itself’.
and another at rest, and hence does not straightforwardly lead to contradiction. These considerations indicate that the scope of Galen’s criticism of Aristotle cannot be understood without a detailed analysis of Galen’s argument and an examination of the following questions. (1) How does Galen derive the contradiction ‘AB moves and does not move’ from his definition of moving primarily and in itself? (2) Does Galen’s definition disprove Aristotle’s thesis that anything that moves is moved by something, in implying that things that have an inner source of motion are not moved by something? And (3) why does he base his argument on his definition of moving primarily and in itself and not on Aristotle’s definition?

Moreover, Galen’s criticism of Aristotle’s argument is based on the assumption that the characterization ‘moving primarily and in itself’ holds only for simple bodies whose parts are similar to each other and to the whole (69b31–2 Carullah; 63a10–19, 64a9 Escorial). This assumption may refer to organic tissues or to the natural elements (i.e. earth, water, air, and fire), but Alexander’s claim that Galen maintains that only animate bodies move primarily and in themselves (63b9–10 Escorial) suggests that Galen has the former in mind.11 This suggestion finds support in Galen’s extant writings, where the expression ‘simple’ or ‘primary bodies’ refers to homoeomerous bodily parts, such as cartilage, bones, nerves, membranes, ligaments, and the flesh of organs such as heart, liver, brain, kidneys, lungs, and spleen.12 Understood in this light, Galen criticizes Aristotle’s argument from the standpoint of his own medical theory. His understanding of the expression ‘moving primarily and in itself’ echoes his definition of one type of motion—activity [ἐνέργεια]—as an active motion [δραστικὴ κίνησις] that originates from the thing itself and not from an external thing.13 And his claim that this characterization holds only for homoeomerous parts reflects

11 Pines claims that it is more reasonable to identify the simple bodies with the elements (‘Omne quod movetur’, 31). Alexander’s mention of the elements gives rise to this interpretation, but it does not accord with Galen’s view as presented in the Escorial manuscript, which was unknown to Pines.

12 e.g. Elem. sec. Hipp. 6, 110. 17–21 De Lacy (=i. 465–6 K.); 112. 16–18 De Lacy (=i. 468 K.); 8, 126. 1–5 De Lacy (=i. 479 K.); Nat. fac. 1. 6, 110. 5–13 Helmreich (=ii. 12 K.); AA 5. 6, ii. 511 K.; 6. 4, ii. 550 K.; QAM 3. 3, 37. 9–12 Mueller (=iv. 774 K.); PHP 8. 4, 500. 3–19 De Lacy (=v. 673 K.); 8. 5, 506. 21–4 De Lacy (=v. 681 K.); Meth. med. 5. 2, x. 309 K. In Galen’s view, homoeomerous parts are simple in relation to perception, but in effect they are made of the four humours.

13 PHP 6. 1, 360 De Lacy (=v. 506–7 K.); De usu part. 17. 1, ii. 437 Helmreich (=iii. 346–7 K.); Meth. med. 1. 6, x. 45 K.; 2. 3, x. 87 K.; Loc. aff. 1. 3, viii. 32 K.
his view that the primary activities of the body are found in these parts.\textsuperscript{14} Considering the centrality of these views to Galen’s medical theory, it is unlikely that he propounds them in the present context only for the sake of exposing a logical flaw in Aristotle’s argument and ignores the thesis that it establishes, although it may cast doubt on his accounts of activity and homoeomerous parts.

In the light of these considerations, I examine Galen’s argument against Aristotle in the context of his medical theory. I show first that his contention that Aristotle’s argument rests on contradictory assumptions depends on his definition of moving primarily and in itself and on the assumption that only homoeomerous bodies move in this way. Specifically, I show that Galen argues that the resting part assumption contradicts his definition of moving primarily and in itself because the motion of homoeomerous bodies strongly depends on their substance and therefore they cannot have one part in motion and another at rest. In the second part of my discussion of Galen I argue that his account of the motion of homoeomerous parts entails a rejection of the conclusion of Aristotle’s argument, since the motion of these parts is internally caused and while external causes necessitate alterations of this motion, they do not cause it in their own right. Here I also show that, from Galen’s viewpoint, he effectively challenges the validity of Aristotle’s argument, since Galen’s definition of moving primarily and in itself reflects his interpretation of Aristotle and his followers. Next, I analyse Alexander’s reply to Galen, showing that it comprises two independent arguments: one that is confined to the validity of the inference from the resting part assumption to the conclusion ‘AB does not move primarily and in itself’, and the other that defends the thesis that anything that moves is moved by something, by securing the validity and soundness of Aristotle’s whole argument. I argue that in the first argument Alexander shows that the inference that Galen criticizes is valid because the resting part assumption can serve as an antecedent of a true conditional, even if it is impossible as an assertoric proposition. Regarding the second argument, I claim that here Alexander shows that the resting part assumption is true without qualification of all continuous bodies because the parts of these bodies exist only in potentiality, and so can be at rest so long as they are continuous with the whole. My analysis of these arguments leads to the conclusion that the debate between Alexander

\textsuperscript{14} On this sect. 2.2 below.
and Galen is rooted in a more fundamental disagreement over two metaphysical issues, hylomorphism and efficient causality, because it turns on the questions whether inner causal factors are ontologically distinct from their bearers and whether external causes are the primary efficient causes.

2. Galen’s criticism

2.1. Galen’s argument

In the Refutation of Galen Alexander presents four slightly different formulations of Galen’s argument. To clarify the respective roles of Galen’s definition of moving primarily and in itself and its restriction to homoeomerous bodies, I discuss these formulations separately, beginning with the following two:

When some magnitude, in the event that its parts are continuous, moves essentially and according to first intention, it must be then one of the simple first bodies. These are the bodies whose parts are similar, since these alone are the things that move essentially and according to first intention. Since the things whose natural principle of motion is in them are the first simple bodies, and since these consist of similar parts, the part in these things is no other than the whole. Hence, Aristotle was not definitely right with respect to continuous things [in holding] that when one part of them stops, the whole stops. For the part in these things is no other than the whole. (63ᵃ⁹–¹⁷ Escorial)

There is basically no difference between our maintaining that some part of a thing that moves essentially is at rest and our maintaining that the whole moves and does not move at one and the same time. For under no circumstances is there any difference in these things between the part and the whole. (63ᵇ¹⁶–¹⁸ Escorial)

From these passages we see that Galen’s restriction of his argument to homoeomerous bodies is crucial for his criticism of Aristotle. Through this restriction, he counters the resting part assumption by indicating that the divisibility of continuous magnitudes does not suffice to warrant the assumption that one of their parts can have a property that the whole does not have. Homoeomerous bodies

---

15 All translations from the Arabic are from Rescher and Marmura, The Refutation by Alexander.

16 ‘Essentially’ is a translation of bi ʾl-dhātibi, which means here kalʾ ʾaʾbrāʾ. ‘According to first intention’ (alaʾ l-qasḍ al awwal) is, according to Pines, a translation of πρῶτον (‘Omne quod movetur’, 31 n. 54).
are divisible but their parts have at least some of the properties of
the whole. However, while this reasoning entails that the resting
part assumption requires further justification, it does not under-
mine Aristotle’s argument immediately since the similarity of the
parts of homoeomerous bodies to each other and to the whole does
not necessarily imply that it is true for any property that if the whole
has it, the part must have it too.\(^\text{17}\) For example, ‘long’ is a property
of the leg bone but it is not a property of each of the leg bone’s parts.

Thus, to refute Aristotle’s argument Galen has to assume that it is
specifically true for the property ‘being in motion’ that if the whole
has it, the part must have it too. An examination of the two other
formulations of Galen’s argument shows that he indeed bases his
argument on this assumption:

Things that are of this sort, I mean the things whose source of motion is in
them and which are not moved basically by any external thing . . . cannot
have one of their parts come to rest so long as they are all contained within
their specific substance. (63²20–3 Escorial)

When Aristotle, however, set down in these statements we have presented
and described that one of the things that move essentially is AB, he made
the exception that some part of it, CB, does not move. And there is no dif-
ference between this and our setting down that the whole moves and does
not move at one and the same time. This is so because inasmuch as all of
it is of one substance, it being one of the things that move according to the
first intention, at no time is there any part in it which is not moving basic-
ally. (63³23–64¹ Escorial)

Here Galen adds an explanation to the earlier formulations. He
claims that a homoeomerous body cannot have one part in motion
and another at rest ‘as long as it is contained in its specific sub-
stance’ or ‘inasmuch as all of it is of one substance’. These expres-
sions are vague, particularly because the term ‘substance’ may refer
either to the nature of homoeomerous bodies or to their material
constitution. Galen uses a similar expression in On the Difference
of Homoeomerous Parts 1, where he claims that the term ‘homoeo-
merous’ is misleading, in implying that the parts of such bodies
are similar (homoia), whereas in effect they are identical because
‘the form of their substance is one and the same in their whole’
(50. 14 Strohmaier).\(^\text{18}\) Although this claim does not clarify the term

\(^{17}\) Cf. R. J. Hankinson (trans. and comm.), Galen: On the Therapeutic Method,

\(^{18}\) Cf. Loc. aff. 1. 2, viii. 26 K., and SMT 3. 16, xi. 584 K.
'substance’, it brings to light an important assumption that Galen does not explicitly state in the above passages, namely that the parts of homoeomerous bodies are the same in substance. This assumption brings Galen closer to arguing that the resting part assumption is impossible. It entails that the parts of homoeomerous bodies cannot have a substantial property that the whole does not have because the parts of these bodies and the whole are the same in substance. Still, this account does not suffice to undermine the validity of Aristotle’s argument. It implies that for any property \( x \) that belongs to the substance of homoeomerous bodies, if AB is \( x \) then CB cannot be not-\( x \), but it does not imply that if AB is in motion then CB cannot be at rest. To imply this conclusion, Galen’s argument would additionally require the assumption that motion belongs to the substance of homoeomerous bodies, or at least strongly depends on their substance. The *Refutation of Galen* contains no explicit formulation of this assumption, but it is implied from Galen’s claim that homoeomerous bodies have an inner source of motion, which suggests that something in the internal constitution of these bodies accounts for their motion. It is also implied from Alexander’s report that in Galen’s view only things that move perpetually, like the heavens, or things that move so long as they retain their nature, like the heart, move primarily and in themselves:

For he [Galen] gave a certain division of the essentially moving things, saying: ‘Some of them move perpetually; either absolutely, and these consist of the eternal everlasting things such as the heavens; or not absolutely, and these consist of things which are not eternal and everlasting but which continue to move as long as they retain their nature as with the heart.’

Galen’s characterization of the things that move perpetually but not absolutely, such as the heart, implies that he holds that there is...

---

19 See also 67^a^1–3 Escorial. This passage continues: ‘[Finally], some of the self-moving things move at certain times but not others, as with the things that are said to move by volition and choice.’ This claim accords with Galen’s assumption that only homoeomerous bodies move primarily and in themselves. Galen’s anatomical observations attest that when the homoeomerous parts of voluntary motion, i.e. the nerves, are incised, the part above the cut preserves sensation and motion, whereas the part below the cut does not (PHP 6. 3, 372. 22–5 De Lacy = v. 520 K.; 7. 5, 454. 21–3 De Lacy = v. 620 K.; Mot. dub. 1. 10–13, 124. 14–126. 2 Nutton–Bos). This exception does not undermine Galen’s argument as a criticism of Aristotle, since nerves do not figure in Aristotle’s physiology (on this see P. Gregoric and M. Kuhar, ‘Aristotle’s Physiology of Animal Motion: On *Neura* and *Muscles*’, *Apeiron*, 47:1 (2014), 95–119).
a strong correlation between their nature and their motion: when they retain their nature they move, and when they do not they cease moving. A similar account can be given for the things that move perpetually and absolutely. Earlier in the Refutation of Galen Alexander reports that Galen ascribes the view that the heavens are among the things that move in themselves to Aristotle (67ª1–3 Escorial). If indeed he has in mind Aristotle’s account of celestial motion, he assumes a strong dependence between motion and matter: that is, between ether and the heavens’ circular and eternal motion.

This analysis clarifies how Galen derives the conclusion that Aristotle’s argument rests on contradictory assumptions. He assumes that (1) only homoeomerous bodies move primarily and in themselves; (2) the part of these bodies and the whole are of the same substance; and (3) ‘being in motion’ strongly depends on the substance of homoeomerous bodies. These assumptions entail in turn that (4) if the whole AB moves then the part CB cannot be at rest. Galen’s contention that Aristotle’s argument rests on contradictory assumptions follows from this conditional. If the consequent of this conditional is false and CB is at rest, the antecedent is false and AB is at rest, otherwise the conditional is false. But Aristotle assumes that AB moves and that CB is at rest, thus if the former assumption is true AB moves, and if the latter is true AB is at rest, consequently Aristotle assumes that AB both moves and does not move.²⁰

Although this reconstruction explains why in Galen’s view Aristotle’s argument rests on contradictory assumptions, it leaves unclear the crucial assumption that the motion of homoeomerous bodies strongly depends on their substance. As a result, it raises the questions whether this dependence is causal and whether it entails a denial of the thesis that anything that moves is moved by something. In what follows I address these questions by analysing first Galen’s account of internal causes and then his account of external causes. This analysis also clarifies why Galen bases his criticism of Aristotle’s argument on his and not on Aristotle’s definition of moving primarily and in itself.

²⁰ A concise formulation of this inference is found in the Refutation of Galen, where Alexander reports that Galen claimed that each of Aristotle’s assumptions entails its contradictory (64ª1–3 Escorial); that is, the assumption ‘AB moves’ entails that CB cannot be at rest, and the assumption ‘CB is at rest’ entails that AB does not move.
2.2. Internal and external causes of activities

The idea that homoeomerous bodies move primarily and in themselves is prevalent in the Galenic corpus, where he often associates these bodies with a type of motion called ‘activity’ (ἐνέργεια), which is an active motion (δραστικὴ κίνησις) that arises from the thing itself (ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ) in contrast to affection (πάθος), which arises from another thing.21 This idea finds expression in Galen’s view that there are two genera of activity: one which is the primary and most principal (κυριώτατον) activity of the simple homoeomerous parts and the other which is the accidental or secondary activity of the whole organs (Const. art. med. 3, 62. 17–27 Fortuna=i. 234–5 K.). In keeping with this view, Galen classifies diseases into those of the homoeomerous parts and those of the organic parts, and regards the former as the primary disease of all. This classification is based on his assumption that activities such as seeing and walking are not activities of the whole organs, e.g. of the eye or the leg, but of one of their homoeomerous parts, e.g. the crystalline humour and the muscles (Meth. med. 7. 2, x. 459–60 K.). Further, Galen assumes that each homoeomerous part necessarily has one unique activity.22 He grounds this assumption in the natural constitution of these parts, saying that they were generated by nature for the sake of one activity (Elem. ex Hipp. 9, 126. 19–21 De Lacy=i. 481 K.; Morb. diff. 4, vi. 846 K.), and associates their activities with their material composition, stating that the number of activities corresponds to the number of the mixtures (κράσεις) of the homoeomerous parts (San. tu. 1. 5, 9. 4–6 Koch=vi. 15 K.). In therapeutic contexts, Galen states that the activities of homoeomerous parts causally depend on the mixture. In On the Therapeutic Method 2. 6 he identifies the active cause (αἰτία δραστική) of activity with the good mixture (εὐκρασία) of the four qualities, i.e. hot, cold, dry, and moist (x. 116 K.), and says that activities come to be by (ὑπὸ) the homoeomerous parts (x. 118 K.). However, in the more theoretical context of On the Natural Faculties he calls the cause of activity dunamis (e.g. i. 2. 105. 15 Helmhreich=ii. 7 K.), thereby suggesting that the material constitution of

21 For references see n. 13 above. See also Meth. med. 2. 3, x. 89 K., where he ascribes a similar account of activity to the ‘ancients’. Galen presents another sense of activity that holds for motion according to nature, regardless of whether it arises from the thing itself or from another thing (PHP 6. 1, 362. 8–9 De Lacy=v. 507 K.).

22 e.g. Part. hom. diff. 2, 54. 7 Strohmaier; Nat. fac. 1. 6, 110. 24–6 Helmreich (=ii. 14 K.); Meth. med. 2. 6, x. 118 K.
the homoeomerous parts does not provide the full causal explanation of their activities. These divergent views can be understood in the light of Galen’s account of *dunamis* and his agnosticism regarding the substance of this active cause. The most detailed discussion of these matters is found in the following passage from *Causes of Pulses 1. 2*:\

From this it is clear that there is a certain cause by which they [sc. the pulses] are moved for a time, but it is difficult to discover what it is. One [person] says that it is the innate heat, another that it is the *tonos*, or the property of the mixture, or the entire composition of the bodies, or only the *pneuma*, or one of these things, or all of them together. And others presently introduced an incorporeal *dunamis* that uses all, or some, or one of the mentioned proper organs of motion. We call this productive [δημουργούσα] cause of the pulses, whatever it may be, *dunamis*, even if we are ignorant of its substance, from its being capable of producing pulses, just as, I believe, we customarily call any other thing *dunamis* from [the fact that] it can make the very thing that it can. For *dunamis* is of something and we possess an understanding of its conception in [the category of] relative, and for this reason we call it so when we are ignorant of the substance. (ix. 4. 10–5. 7 K.)

Here Galen says that *dunamis* is a term that he uses for the active cause of the pulse because he is ignorant of its substance; but he clarifies that it is not an empty term but a term that expresses the relation between cause and effect, i.e. the cause’s capacity to bring about an effect. By using this term, then, Galen can offer a causal explanation of bodily activities without committing himself to any definite position regarding the factor that serves as a cause. So in stating that the active cause is a *dunamis*, Galen does not offer an alternative to the different accounts that he enumerates above. Being a relational term, *dunamis* is not an absolute distinct factor which, to

---


24 Cf. *Nat. fac.* 1. 4, 107. 8–10 Helmreich (=ii. 9 K.); *Prop. plac.* 14. 1, 110. 15–21 Nutton; *Temp.* 3. 6, i. 693 K.
use Galen’s metaphor, inhabits substances as we inhabit our houses (QAM 3. 2, 33. 17–34 Mueller=iv. 769 K.), but expresses only the relation between cause and effect. Accordingly, within Galen’s theory the ambiguity as to whether activities are caused by the mixture of the homoeomerous parts or by the *dunamis* is less consequential than it may seem at first glance. In Galen’s relational analysis of inner active causes, these two accounts do not refer to distinct causal factors, i.e. the mixture of the homoeomerous part and a *dunamis*, but to the same factor under different descriptions: one that describes the cause as an absolute entity, and the other, relational description that expresses only its capacity to cause an effect.

In keeping with this relational account, Galen formulates his notion of *dunamis* in exact correspondence to his account of its correlative, i.e. its effect ‘activity’ (ἐνέργεια). He counts *dunamis* among the cohesive causes (αἴτια συνεκτικά), which he construes in opposition to the Stoics as causes of generation, not of existence (Caus. puls. 1. 1, ix. 1–2 K.; CC 7, 138. 6–9 Kollesch–Nickel–Strohmaier), and stresses that activities are processes, or in his words ‘have their being in generation’ (Meth. med. 2. 3, x. 87 K.). Further, he states that bodily activities, though they may seem persistent, are constantly in motion (CC 8, 138. 16–31 Kollesch–Nickel–Strohmaier).

In *On the Utility of the Parts* 4. 2 Galen appeals to the notion of *dunamis* in accounting for this constant motion:

> Just as Homer makes Hephaestus’ works of art self-moving . . . so you should observe that in the body of the animal there is nothing inert, nothing unmoved, but that every part performs its different well-conducted activity with the aid of a suitable construction because the creator bestowed upon each certain divine *dunameis*. (i. 196. 14–23 Helmreich=iii. 268. 10–17 K.)

Galen’s appeal to Hephaestus’ self-moving works of art in describing bodily activities is not a poetic metaphor but is grounded in his account of natural organs. In *On Affected Parts* 1. 7 Galen dis-

---

25 See also Loc. aff. 2. 5, viii. 126–8 K.
26 The former description suffices for therapeutic purposes, since the physician need only know that a change of a homoeomerous part’s mixture necessarily results in a change of this part’s activity.
27 The other cohesive causes are the function (χρεία) and the organ (see Caus. puls. 1. 1, ix. 1 K., and CC 8, 139. 4–6 Kollesch–Nickel–Strohmaier). For a thorough analysis of Galen’s notion of cohesive causes see R. J. Hankinson, ‘Causation in Galen’, in Barnes and Jouanna (eds.), *Galien et la philosophie*, 31–66. For an explanation of Galen’s use of the term ‘generation’ in this context see Hankinson, *Therapeutic Method*, 172–3.
28 See also Mot. musc. 1. 8, esp. iv. 403–4 K.
tistinguishes natural organs from psychic organs (i.e. the organs of perception and voluntary motion), claiming that the former have a connate *dunamis* analogous to the magnet’s *dunamis* of attracting iron, whereas the latter receive their *dunamis* from the brain (viii. 66 K.). In Galen’s view this difference renders natural organs more autonomous than psychic organs. They need the arteries and the veins only for the preservation of their substance, but if their substance were stable they would need nothing but their connate *dunamis* to perform their activities (viii. 66 K.). By this account, the activities of natural organs are in principle self-caused: like the magnet, their activities depend solely on their connate *dunamis*, but unlike the magnet, their substance is not stable, hence they need the arteries and the veins.

This analysis clarifies Galen’s assumption that the motion of homoeomerous bodies strongly depends on their substance, on which his criticism of Aristotle’s argument rests. It shows first that, in Galen’s view, those homoeomerous bodies that have a connate *dunamis* cause their own activities, and second that, due to Galen’s agnosticism, this inner cause is described only in relation to its effect. Further, Galen’s claim that the activities of homoeomerous parts causally depend on the good mixture of the four qualities explains why he bases his argument on his and not on Aristotle’s definition of moving primarily and in itself. In *On the Therapeutic Method* 2. 6 Galen says that the followers of Aristotle and Theophrastus prepared the ground for the view that bodily activities are caused by the homoeomerous parts (x. 118 K.), and in *The Faculties of the Soul Follow the Mixture of the Body* 3. 3 he interprets Aristotle as holding that the form of natural bodies is identical with the mixture of the four qualities (37. 16–19 Mueller=iv. 774 K.). Understood in this light, Galen’s contention that moving primarily and in itself means having an inner source of motion and not being moved by any external thing reflects his interpretation of Aristotle and his followers. This interpretation implies that on the Aristotelian view homoeomerous bodies cause their own motion, and that their inner source of motion—the form—is not distinct from their material


constitution, i.e. the mixture of the four qualities. Thus, from Galen’s perspective he offers an effective argument against Aristotle because according to his interpretation, Aristotle accepts his definition of moving primarily and in itself and holds that things that have an inner source of motion are not moved by something, since this source of motion is not distinct from their material constitution. Still, these conclusions do not straightforwardly imply that Galen rejects the thesis that anything that moves is moved by something because they do not exclude the possibility that in Galen’s view bodily activities are also caused by external factors. I shall examine this possibility by considering Galen’s account of external causes.

In the opening paragraph of *Causes of Pulses* Galen says:

Of the causes that change pulses, some are causes of their generation while others are only causes of alteration. Causes of generation are the function [χρεία] for the sake of which they come to be, the *dunamis* by which [they come to be], and the organs through which they are propagated, while the causes of alteration are the others that are called preceding [προηγούμενα] and those that are antecedent [προκατάρχοντα] even to them. For the genus of causes is threefold not only with regard to pulses but with regard to everything else. One, the primary and most principal, is that which they call ‘cohesive’ and it derives its name from the fact that it contains their substance and it is a cause of generation, as said earlier. The other two genera are not causes of the generation of pulses but they are causes of change of pulses that have already been generated. (1. 1, ix. 1–2. 4 K.)

In this passage Galen gives a straightforward affirmative answer to the question whether bodily activities are internally generated. He distinguishes the generation of bodily activities, such as the pulse, from their alteration, and states that the former is caused only by the internal cohesive causes and the latter by two types of external cause, preceding and antecedent.31 Galen’s account of alteration of activities calls for clarification. In *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 6. 1 he claims that the definition of activity as active motion that arises from the thing itself holds for all activities regardless of whether they are natural (κατὰ φύσιν) or unnatural (παρὰ φύσιν), for example a pulse that is quicker or slower than the natural pulse (362. 12–14 De Lacy=v. 508 K.). In view of the above passage,

31 Antecedent causes are the evident external causes that trigger a sequence of events that leads to disease; preceding causes are the intermediate internal dispositions between the antecedent and the cohesive causes. For a detailed discussion of this terminology see Hankinson, ‘Causation in Galen’, 37, 41.
this claim gives rise to the question how an unnatural pulse that results from an alteration of the natural state arises from the thing itself, even though it is caused by external causes. Further examination of *Causes of Pulses* 1. 1 shows that altered bodily activities too are primarily caused by the internal cohesive causes. Here Galen describes a process where external cold alters the pulse through a chain of intermediate external causes that ultimately cause fever that alters in turn the function of the pulse, which is one of the cohesive causes (ix. 2–3 K.). Regarding this process, Galen says:

Before the alteration is transmitted to one of the cohesive causes, it is impossible that the pulses change. For this reason these causes of the pulse are the most principal, most precise, and primary, and all the others are [causes] because of them. For they are called causes of pulses because they transmit the externally generated alteration to the cohesive [causes], since they cannot in any way change them [sc. the pulses] in virtue of their specific substance and nature. (ix. 3. 9–15 K.)

This passage clarifies Galen’s claim that the cohesive causes are the most principal causes of bodily activities. It shows that this claim reflects not only his preference for explanations in terms of proximate causes (*Symp. diff.* 1, vii. 44 K.), but his view that bodily activities are not primarily caused by external causes. According to this passage, external causes are called causes because of the cohesive causes; they do not change the pulse in virtue of their substance and nature but because they transmit (διαδίδοσθαι) an alteration to one of its cohesive causes; and the pulse cannot be altered before the alteration is transmitted to one of the cohesive causes. Galen does not clarify these claims here, but his definition of the pulse helps to elucidate them. In *Difference of Pulses* 4. 2 Galen defines the pulse as follows:

The pulse is a unique activity primarily of the heart and secondarily of the arteries, which are moved according to dilatation and contraction by vital *dunamis* for the sake of the preservation of the symmetry of the innate heat and the generation of psychic *pneuma* in the brain. (viii. 714. 13–18 K.)

From this definition we see that the *dunamis* is not simply an active cause but a cause that brings about a certain effect for the sake of something. This definition explains Galen’s claim that the pulse cannot be altered before the alteration is transmitted to one of the cohesive causes. Specifically, it suggests that the process whereby external cold leads to an alteration of the pulse involves two types
of causal explanation: a mechanistic explanation that accounts for the transmission of alteration to one of the cohesive causes and a teleological explanation that accounts for the alteration of the pulse. Closer examination of the final stage that leads to an alteration of the pulse clarifies this distinction. This stage involves two alterations: in the first fever alters the function of the pulse, i.e. the preservation of the symmetry of the innate heat, and in the second this effect on the function causes the alteration of the pulse. The first alteration is an ordinary qualitative change that fever causes in virtue of its nature: it alters the symmetry of the innate heat by heating. By contrast, the second alteration (i.e. the alteration of the pulse) is teleological: it results in a quicker, stronger, and more frequent pulsation that counteracts, rather than transmits, the damaging effect of heating on the symmetry of the innate heat. This alteration cools the innate heat by drawing in cold air in dilatation and dispelling the smoky residues (καπνώδη περιττώματα) of the innate heat in contraction.\footnote{This analysis is based on Caus. puls. 3. 14, ix. 145 K. A similar analysis is found in R. J. Hankinson, ‘Philosophy of Nature’, in id. (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Galen, 210–41 at 231–3. Cf. Hankinson, ‘Causation in Galen’, 70–2.} Being teleological, this effect cannot be brought about by fever or heat by itself, but its occurrence requires the dunamis that changes the pulse for the sake of its function, i.e. maintaining the symmetry of the innate heat. Thus, although the alteration of the pulse is necessitated by external causes, it is an activity that arises from the thing itself, namely from the cohesive causes.

This conclusion reconciles Galen’s definition of activity as motion that arises from the thing itself with his claim that alterations of activities are caused by external causes. It shows that the alteration of the pulse is a teleological reaction of the inner dunamis that externally caused alterations trigger when they affect the function. Further, it accords with Galen’s On Antecedent Causes, whose principal aim is to show that external factors cause impairments of bodily activities although they are necessary but insufficient conditions for these effects.\footnote{Cf. R. J. Hankinson (ed. and comm.), Galen: On Antecedent Causes (Cambridge, 1998), 45–8.} According to the above analysis, the alteration of the pulse cannot occur without the effect of the external cold and fever on the symmetry of the innate heat, but this effect cannot cause the alteration of the pulse without the dunamis that changes it for the sake of its function. Finally, this conclusion holds not only for the pulse but for all bodily activities, since in the opening para-
Galen explicitly states that the distinction between the three genera of causes (i.e. cohesive, preceding, and antecedent) holds for all bodily activities, not only for the pulse. Thus, if cohesive causes are involved in any causal process that leads to bodily activities, externally caused changes do not suffice to bring about the teleological effects that the cohesive causes cause. Consequently, altered bodily activities too are internally caused by the cohesive causes, since they are teleologically aimed processes that external causes necessitate but do not cause in their own right.

From this analysis we see that in his criticism of Aristotle Galen does not merely challenge the validity of Aristotle’s argument in *Physics* 7.1 but rejects at the outset the thesis that it establishes. Galen’s contention that the resting part assumption is impossible follows from his definition of the expression ‘moving primarily and in itself’ as having an inner source of motion and not being moved by any external thing, and from the assumption that only homoeomerous parts of animate bodies move in this way. An examination of this definition and this assumption in the light of Galen’s extant writings shows that they reflect his view that the natural activities of the homoeomerous bodily parts are internally caused by their cohesive causes. Placed in this context, Galen’s argument leads not only to the conclusion that the thesis that anything that moves is moved by something is not universally true but to the stronger conclusion that this thesis is universally false because homoeomerous parts are the only things that move primarily and in themselves.

Further, this analysis brings to light two implicit assumptions that underlie Galen’s criticism: (1) Aristotle holds that the inner active cause—the form—is not distinct from the material constitution, and (2) external causes are necessary conditions for alterations of activities, but they neither generate activities nor primarily cause their alterations. The full significance of these assumptions for the debate between Alexander and Galen becomes clear in the following discussion of Alexander’s reply.

3. Alexander’s reply

3.1. Hypothetical possibility and the validity of Aristotle’s argument

In addressing Galen’s criticism, Alexander interprets Aristotle’s argument in the light of his general understanding of *Physics* 7.1
as containing more logical proofs (Simpl. In Phys. 1036. 12–13 Diels), and contends that Aristotle’s argument in Physics 7. 1 is not demonstrative but logical (67a34–5 Carullah; 60a20 Escorial). He claims that Aristotle’s assumption ‘if something comes to rest because something else ceases moving, it is necessarily moved by something’ has one argumentative status when the thing that comes to rest is external and another when this thing is internal. In the former case the argument is demonstrative because the thing that comes to rest is the cause of motion, and in the latter case it is logical because the thing that comes to rest is not the cause of motion (60a20b19 and 68b19–69a12 Escorial). On the basis of this interpretation, Alexander argues that the above assumption does not explain the conclusion that anything that moves is moved by something but necessarily entails it, since this assumption and the conclusion are unique properties (ἴδια) of bodies, just as laughing and being receptive of knowledge are unique properties of every man (61a23 Escorial). Accordingly, Alexander construes Aristotle’s argument as a valid and sound syllogism in the first figure (67b22–3 Carullah):

1. Anything that moves primarily and in itself does not move when something ceases moving.
2. Anything that does not move when something ceases moving is moved by something.

34 Rescher and Marmura translate the words mantiq and mantiqiya, which usually mean ‘logic’ and ‘logical’, by ‘dialectic’ and ‘dialectical’. Since the argument that Alexander describes as mantiqiya is not dialectical in the technical sense, I follow Pines and use the word ‘logical’ (Pines, ‘Omne quod movetur’, 29). According to Silvia Fazzo, Simplicius’ report serves as one piece of evidence that casts doubt on the view that Galen’s criticism of Aristotle’s argument in Physics 7. 1 reflects his theoretical disagreement with Aristotle (Fazzo, ‘Alexandre d’Aphrodise contre Galien’, 134–5). However, this conclusion does not follow from Simplicius’ report on Alexander’s exegetical approach. It only implies that in Physics 7 Aristotle does not present demonstrative arguments in support of his physical views. In the Refutation of Galen Alexander concedes that Aristotle’s argument in Physics 7. 1 is not demonstrative.

35 Cf. Simpl. In Phys. 1247. 2–10 Diels. In characterizing this argument as demonstrative Alexander understands ‘demonstrative’ as equivalent to ‘explanatory’ and disregards the other characteristics of demonstrative premisses, for instance that they are essential predications. This approach is not uncommon in later antiquity. For example, in his commentary on the first book of Euclid’s Elements Proclus examines the question whether Euclid’s proof that the sum of the interior angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles is demonstrative by focusing solely on the question whether it is explanatory (In Eucl. 206. 12–26 Friedlein).

Therefore:

(3) Anything that moves primarily and in itself is moved by something.

The first premiss of this syllogism is a generalization of the conclusion of the inference that Galen criticizes on the grounds that the resting part assumption is contradictory: that is, when CB is at rest AB does not move primarily and in itself. Therefore, our understanding of Alexander’s reply to Galen hinges on the answer to the question how Alexander justifies his contention that this premiss is true (67b20 Carullah). A superficial examination suggests that Alexander justifies this premiss by arguing that the resting part assumption is not hypothetically impossible (henceforth, ‘the hypothetical reconstruction’). This suggestion supports the logical interpretation of the debate between Alexander and Galen, implying that this debate is confined to the question whether the resting part assumption is absolutely impossible (as Galen holds) or not hypothetically impossible (as Alexander holds). However, a careful examination of the hypothetical reconstruction casts doubt on this interpretation, by showing that in his reply to Galen Alexander uses two distinct arguments: the hypothetical reconstruction that secures only the validity of the inference from the resting part assumption to the conclusion ‘AB does not move primarily and in itself’, and the syllogistic reconstruction that secures the validity and soundness of Aristotle’s whole argument.

In his commentary on Physics 7.1 Simplicius describes the hypothetical reconstruction in the following way:

But Alexander, though suspecting the demonstration on many grounds, chose to say that it is not hypothetically impossible [οὐκ ἔστι πρὸς ὑπόθεσιν ἀδύνατον] to assume that a part of a thing that moves in itself and primarily is at rest, ‘for’, he says, ‘only things that are destructive of each other are hypothetically impossible, for example, sailing through a rock’. (1039. 15–19 Diels)

According to this report, Alexander does not utterly reject Galen’s contention that the resting part assumption is impossible by arguing that this assumption is possible without qualification, but only contends that it is not hypothetically impossible, i.e. that it is

hypothetically possible. Simplicius’ obscure explanation of the expression ‘not hypothetically impossible’ leaves unclear how exactly in Alexander’s view the resting part assumption is possible, but the *Refutation of Galen* sheds further light on this issue. Here Alexander says that Galen’s criticism results from a logically unjustified shift from an actually impossible proposition, e.g. ‘a man is god’, to the conditional ‘if a man is god, he is incorruptible’, which is not hypothetically impossible because the consequent of this conditional does not contradict its antecedent (67b1–5 Escorial). This evidence clarifies Simplicius’ report on Alexander’s reply to Galen. It shows that in saying that only things that are destructive of each other are hypothetically impossible, Alexander claims that the resting part assumption can serve as an antecedent of the conditional ‘if a part of AB is at rest, then AB does not move primarily and in itself’ because this conditional is true; that is to say, its consequent does not contradict but follows from its antecedent, just as the consequent ‘a man is incorruptible’ does not contradict but follows from the antecedent ‘a man is god’. In propounding this account, then, Alexander does not dispel Galen’s charge of contradiction but argues that although the resting part assumption is absolutely impossible as an assertoric proposition, it validly entails the conclusion that AB does not move primarily and in itself.

So understood, Alexander’s reply to Galen is based on Aristotle’s account of hypothetical (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως) possibility and impossibility in *On the Heavens* 1. 12. According to this account, on certain impossible assumptions necessary propositions are hypothetically impossible and impossible propositions are hypothetically possible. Aristotle illustrates this account through two examples: ‘the sum of the interior angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles’ and ‘the diagonal of a square is commensurable with its side’ (281b3–8). In his commentary on this lemma Simplicius understands the two examples as cases of hypothetical impossibility (323. 2–3 Heiberg) and reports that Alexander holds that the second example illustrates propositions that are impossible in themselves but hypothetically possible (323. 13–15 Heiberg). Alexander’s understanding of the second example is an exact equivalent of the inference from the resting part assumption to the proposition ‘AB does not move primarily and in itself’. The proposition ‘the diagonal of a square is commensurable with its side’ is hypothetically possible on the contradictory
assumption that a certain magnitude is odd and even.\textsuperscript{39} Similarly, the proposition ‘AB does not move primarily and in itself’ is hypothetically possible on a contradictory assumption, since the assumption that a part of a thing that moves primarily and in itself and not in virtue of having a part that moves is at rest amounts to the assumption that this thing both moves and does not move as a whole.\textsuperscript{40}

This analysis addresses Galen’s criticism, by showing that the inference from the resting part assumption to the conclusion ‘AB does not move primarily and in itself’ is valid although it rests on an impossible premiss, but it does not render the above syllogism sound, as Alexander holds. Specifically, it does not entail that the first premiss of this syllogism is true but that it is hypothetically possible on the impossible assumption that a part of AB is at rest. However, Alexander not only says that the first premiss of the above syllogism is true, he also says that the resting part assumption itself is not impossible, since among the things that move primarily and in themselves there are individuals that do so move when one of their parts is at rest, e.g. animals (64\textsuperscript{a}10–11, 67\textsuperscript{b}23–7, 68\textsuperscript{a}22 Escorial). This evidence implies that, in Alexander’s view, there is a valid and sound inference from the resting part assumption to the conclusion that AB does not move primarily and in itself.

Furthermore, the hypothetical reconstruction does not establish the thesis that anything that moves is moved by something, which is the conclusion of Aristotle’s argument and of the above syllogism. It merely entails that this thesis is hypothetically possible and not absolutely true, since it follows from the first premiss of the above syllogism, i.e. from the generalization of the hypothetically possible proposition ‘AB does not move primarily and in itself’. So understood, Aristotle does not even offer a persuasive dialectical argument for the thesis that anything that moves is moved by something. Dialectical arguments from false premisses have probative value if

\textsuperscript{39} In his commentary on Prior Analytics 1. 23 Alexander presents the \textit{reductio ad impossibile} proof which shows that the assumption that the diagonal of a square is commensurable with its side entails that a certain magnitude is odd and even (260. 18–261. 19 Wallies). This proof is found in Euclid’s Elements 10 as the interpolated proposition 117.

\textsuperscript{40} This interpretation explains why in his report on Alexander’s reply Simplicius uses the expression \textit{πρὸς ὑπόθεσιν} and not \textit{ἐξ ὑποθέσεως}. The resting part assumption is not impossible on a certain assumption but it is the impossible assumption on which the proposition ‘AB does not move primarily and in itself’ is hypothetically possible. Thus this assumption is not from (\textit{ἐξ}) a hypothesis but a hypothesis.
one is liable to concede these premisses, but merely hypothetically possible premisses are in effect impossible.\textsuperscript{41} Thus, if the conclusion ‘AB does not move primarily and in itself’ is hypothetically possible and absolutely impossible, like the proposition ‘the diagonal of a square is commensurable with its side’, it is hard to see how one is liable to concede it even for the sake of argument.\textsuperscript{42} These considerations give rise to the suggestion that Alexander does not share with Galen the view that the resting part assumption is contradictory or impossible but grants it in order to show that the inference from this assumption is valid even if it is contradictory, as Galen argues. The following fragment from Alexander’s commentary on \textit{Physics} 8. 5, where he explicitly discusses the validity of Aristotle’s argument in \textit{Physics} 7. 1 (ap. Simpl. \textit{In Phys.} 1246. 30–3 Diels), confirms this suggestion:

Alexander says: ‘This having been said, there is a need to enquire how the hypothesis that assumes that a certain part in a primary self-mover is at rest is possible. Someone can say that he [sc. Aristotle] did not make this claim here but [the claim] that if a part CB were subtracted from the whole self-mover AB and stood still, the whole would no longer be in motion, even if the part that was left behind moved, for what was left behind is no longer a whole, since a part was subtracted from it. But, since it neither is nor remains a whole, it could not move as whole. The person who says this would say that he [sc. Aristotle] used [an argument] very (\textita{πάνυ}) logically and dialectically but not naturally or demonstratively.’\textsuperscript{43} (1247. 2–10 Diels)

Here Alexander presents the hypothetical reconstruction of the resting part assumption. He says that this assumption serves in

\textsuperscript{41} From here we can see that Alexander’s use of the term \textita{πρὸς ὑπόθεσιν} in his commentary on \textit{Prior Analytics} 1. 9, 126. 9–17 Wallies, is irrelevant to his reply to Galen. Here this term is used for a false universal proposition that has the status of a postulate because it may be true at a certain time. (On this passage see I. Mueller and J. Gould (trans. and comm.), \textit{Alexander of Aphrodisias on Aristotle’s Prior Analytics 1. 8–13} (Ithaca, NY, 1999), 120 n. 41.) In Alexander’s reply to Galen this term is used for a hypothetically possible but absolutely impossible assumption, which cannot be true, hence cannot serve as a postulate.

\textsuperscript{42} Notice that Alexander’s claim that the above syllogism is logical does not refer to this argumentative weakness. As stated above, according to Alexander, the syllogistic reconstruction of Aristotle’s argument is logical because it is not explanatory; its middle term is a property, not a cause. On the hypothetical reconstruction, by contrast, Aristotle’s argument is weak in a different way. It entails its conclusion only if a hypothetically possible proposition is asserted as true.

\textsuperscript{43} Alexander’s discussion of Aristotle’s argument in \textit{Physics} 7. 1 in this context indicates that he disproves Galen’s criticism by showing that it does not hold even on Galen’s assumption that Aristotle’s argument deals with self-movers.
Alexander’s argument as an antecedent of a conditional and not as an assertoric proposition, but he distances himself from this reconstruction. He presents it as a possible solution that someone can propose and, in keeping with the above interpretation, stresses that this reconstruction renders Aristotle’s argument very logical and dialectical. Thus this passage confirms the suggestion that Alexander does not espouse the view that the resting part assumption is impossible and also explains why. The antecedent of the conditional that Alexander formulates here is a specific interpretation of the resting part assumption: that is, CB is at rest when subtracted from the whole, which indeed entails that AB both moves and does not move as a whole because when CB is at rest AB is no longer a whole. Accordingly, this passage indicates that Alexander holds that the resting part assumption is absolutely impossible as an assertoric proposition on this specific interpretation, but leaves open the possibility that it is true on a different interpretation. Indeed, this passage appears at the end of a longer paragraph (1246. 30–1247. 2 Diels) that I quote below, where Alexander offers another interpretation of the resting part assumption, viz. CB is at rest while remaining a continuous part of AB, which does not imply that AB both moves and does not move as a whole. Understood in this context, in the above passage Alexander contrasts the interpretation of the resting part assumption that underlies the hypothetical reconstruction with his interpretation, arguing that the former entails that Aristotle’s argument is dialectical whereas his interpretation renders this argument valid and sound. In what follows I explain why according to Alexander’s interpretation, the resting part assumption is not impossible.

3.2. The resting part assumption and continuous wholes

In the Refutation of Galen Alexander discards Galen’s interpretation of the expression ‘moving primarily and in itself’ and, following Aristotle, sees it as holding for things that move not because they are accidents of something that moves or because they contain parts that move. As Alexander observes, this definition is wider than Galen’s; it holds for things that are moved by an external mover naturally or unnaturally as well as for things that have
an inner source of motion (62a17–b16, 67a9–19 Escorial). Through this interpretation Alexander rejects Galen’s assumption that only homoeomerous bodies move primarily and in themselves, but he still needs to argue against Galen that they can have one part in motion and another at rest. In the *Refutation of Galen* Alexander specifically addresses this issue. He states that the homoeomerous parts of animate bodies are moved by the soul (67a13–17 Carullah; 61a3–9 Escorial) and stresses, in opposition to Galen, that the parts of homoeomerous bodies are different from the whole (63b11–13 Escorial). The latter claim features in Alexander’s reconstruction of the argument in *Physics* 7. 1, where he adds to Aristotle’s assumptions the assumption that ‘the part in the things whose parts are similar is other than the whole’ (67b6, 26–7 Carullah). Alexander’s appeal to this assumption suggests that he tries to counter Galen’s claim that the parts of a homoeomerous body have the properties of the whole, but in the *Refutation of Galen* he does not clarify its significance and its argumentative role. I shall clarify this assumption and its role by examining Alexander’s other writings and fragments therefrom.

In his *De anima* Alexander describes the heart and other bodily parts as follows:

Therefore the heart, having in it both the perceptive and the moving dunameis, is reasonably homoeomerous in one sense (because the organ of perception is such) and anhomoeomerous in another sense, for any functional πρακτικόν part, such as hand and foot, is such. For it is homoeomerous in virtue of its body but anhomoeomerous in virtue of its shape. For flesh is not flesh in virtue of its shape, but the heart is such a thing in virtue of its shape, like the hand. (98. 1–7 Bruns)

This account clarifies Alexander’s claim that the parts of homoeomerous bodily organs are similar to each other but different from the whole. It distinguishes the material constitution of these organs from their shape, thereby construing them as homoeomerous in respect of their matter and anhomoeomerous in respect of their shape. In propounding this account Alexander relies on Aristotle’s discussion of wholes found in *Metaphysics* Δ 26, where he assigns the term ‘whole’ (ὅλον) to bounded continuous quantities whose

---

44 Alexander’s understanding of the scope of this definition is based on *Phys.* 8. 4, 254b7–12.

45 In the Carullah manuscript Alexander applies this solution to the elements. I discuss this solution below.
parts are present in them only in potentiality (1023433–4) and their position makes a difference (102411–6), and the term ‘total’ (πᾶν) to bounded quantities whose parts’ position does not make a difference, i.e. heaps. Having drawn this distinction, Aristotle says that certain bounded quantities are both wholes and totals, since their nature remains the same when their parts change position but their shape does not (102411–6). In his commentary on this chapter Alexander identifies these quantities with homeoemerous bodies that have shape, and as in the above passage he says that they are totals in virtue of their substrate and wholes in virtue of their shape (426.11–13 Hayduck). Alexander’s identification of the latter type of bounded quantities with bodily organs or functional parts is useful to him in countering Galen’s criticism of Aristotle’s argument. It implies that the fact that the parts have similar matter does not entail that their function is the same because none of the same parts of the heart’s flesh performs the function of the whole, which depends on the heart’s material constitution but also on its shape. A fragment from Alexander’s’s commentary on Physics 8.5 shows that he defends Aristotle’s argument in Physics 7.1 along these lines.

In Physics 8.5 Aristotle addresses the question whether a whole AB remains a primary self-mover if a part of the mover A or a part of the moved B is subtracted from it. Considering the possibility that after subtraction the remainders of A and B continue to move and be moved respectively, Aristotle argues first that in this case AB will not be a primary self-mover, but then concedes that it may be a primary self-mover if A, or more likely B, is potentially divided but actually undivided (258a27–b5). In his commentary on this discussion Simplicius quotes the following passage from Alexander’s commentary:

46 In contrast to the above passage, in his commentary on Metaphysics Δ 26 Alexander includes the hand among the examples of anhomeoemerous wholes. This discrepancy may be resolved in view of the fact that the other examples that he presents there (the face, the body of each animal, and artefacts) are of bodies that have different organic parts. Thus the example of the hand may refer there to the hand as consisting of different parts, i.e. the palm and the fingers.

47 In view of this, Alexander’s disagreement with Galen can be understood in two ways. In one, he disregards Galen’s distinction between activity and function (χρεία) and confines his account to the latter. In another, he holds that activity depends on the shape, for example in explaining pulsation as a mechanical result of the heart’s hollowness. For Galen’s distinction between function and activity see D. Furley and J. S. Wilkie (ed., trans., comm.), Galen: On Respiration and the Arteries (Princeton, 1984), 58–69; M. Schiefsky, ‘Galen’s Teleology and Functional Explanation’, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 33 (2007), 369–400 at 381–8.
Alexander says: ‘But if the remainder of the self-mover moves after the subtraction, the proof in the previous book through which he seemed to prove that anything that moves is moved by something would be invalid. But in fact’, he says ‘he [sc. Aristotle] did not suppose that this, the part that moves (after the subtraction), is at rest but the part that [remains] in the continuity. And he [sc. Aristotle] said ‘let it be divided’ not in order that one [part] would be separated from the other but in order that it would be taken to be at rest, while remaining in continuity. That he made sure that it is continuous and a whole is clear from the things he [sc. Aristotle] adduced. For he says that if CB, which is a part of AB that is assumed to be a primary self-mover, does not move, AB, he says, will not move as it still remains one and continuous. For it would be ridiculous to say that when CB is subtracted from it, the whole, which no longer exists if CB has been subtracted from it, will not move.’ (1246. 30–1247. 2 Diels)

Here Alexander reconciles Aristotle’s suggestion in Physics 8. 5 that a part of AB may continue to move when separated from the whole and his assumption in Physics 7. 1 that the part CB is at rest, arguing that in the latter case Aristotle does not separate CB from the whole AB but assumes that it remains a continuous part of it.48 In propounding this interpretation, Alexander does not try to explain away an apparent inconsistency in Aristotle’s writings, but to secure the validity of his argument in Physics 7. 1. He does not explain here why this difficulty arises, but his solution suggests that in his view Aristotle’s claim in Physics 8. 5 that a part of a self-mover may be a self-mover exposes the argument in Physics 7. 1 to Galen’s contention that the part of a whole that moves primarily and in itself cannot be at rest. In the above passage Alexander merely justifies his interpretation that in Physics 7. 1 Aristotle assumes that CB remains a continuous part of the whole, but does not explain how this assumption secures the validity of Aristotle’s argument.

Alexander indirectly addresses this issue in another fragment from his commentary on this lemma. Here Alexander reconciles Aristotle’s claim that AB will not be a primary self-mover if the remainders of A and B continue to move and be moved respectively after they are subtracted from it (258a30–2) with the claim found earlier in Physics 8. 5 that if a self-mover moves because one of its parts moves the other, the part will be the primary self-mover, since this part continues to move after it is separated from the

48 In the Refutation of Galen Alexander alludes to this solution (67b15–17 Escorial).
whole \((257^{b}30–2)\). He argues that in the earlier passage Aristotle assumes that the self-moving part exists in actuality and is already separated from the whole, whereas in this lemma he assumes that it is a continuous part that does not move in itself, hence it is not a primary self-mover \((1246. 16–25 \text{ Diels})\). On the basis of this solution, Alexander interprets Aristotle’s claim that if a part of a self-mover is divided in actuality, it no longer has the same nature \((258^{b}2–3)\), saying that until the division the part is potential and not yet existent \((1246. 25–6 \text{ Diels})\).

This discussion clarifies how Alexander’s claim that in *Physics* 7. 1 Aristotle assumes that CB is a continuous part of AB counters Galen’s criticism. Through this interpretation, Alexander rejects Galen’s claim that a part of a self-mover cannot be at rest, by arguing that the parts of continuous wholes do not move in themselves because they do not exist in actuality. However, this interpretation does not utterly undermine Galen’s criticism. It merely implies that if the parts of AB move in themselves, AB is not a continuous whole, but it does not exclude the possibility that the discrete parts of a self-mover are in motion. Alexander addresses this difficulty through another interpretation of Aristotle’s claim that if a part of a self-mover is divided in actuality, it no longer has the same nature:

> Even if the moving thing is divisible, it is not thereby divisible as something moved. For it is possible that when it is divided it is no longer moved by the mover by which the whole was moved, since it comes to be of a different nature and does not remain the same sort of thing as it was, when the unmoved [mover] was its mover. \((1246. 27–30 \text{ Diels})\)

Through this interpretation Alexander rejects the possibility that a part can move after an actual division, by claiming that after its separation from the whole the part may lose the nature in virtue of which it moved. He formulates this interpretation in terms of Aristotle’s account of self-movers and regards the whole as consisting of two parts: one that plays the role of an unmoved mover and the other that plays the role of the moved.

Alexander appeals to this account in the *Refutation of Galen*. He interprets Plato’s claim that the soul is self-moving in Aristotelian terms, ascribing to him the view that the soul is moved by something, i.e. by a *dunamis* \((\text{quwwa})\) that resides in it \((66^{b}23–67^{a}1 \text{ Carullah})\), and interprets Aristotle’s account of animate and
elemental motion in *Physics* 8. 4 in the same vein, arguing that animals are moved by their soul and the elements by their inclination, i.e. their heaviness or lightness (67a18–20 Carullah). Consequently, through this interpretation Alexander secures the validity of Aristotle’s argument in *Physics* 7. 1 by rejecting Galen’s contention that the resting part assumption is impossible or contradictory. He argues that the continuous parts of self-movers do not move in themselves and that they do not necessarily move when they are separated from their wholes. He also justifies the conclusion that anything that moves is moved by something, by arguing that apparent self-movers, such as animate bodies and the elements, have an inner mover, hence are moved by something.

3.3. *Metaphysical consequences*

Alexander’s claim in the *Refutation of Galen* that animate bodies and the elements are moved by their soul and inclination has no exact parallel in his original writings in Greek. Here Alexander does not use the preposition ‘by’ (ὑπό) to describe how the soul, the inclination, and enmattered forms in general account for motion, but the expression ‘in virtue of’ (κατά), which, being explanatory in a broad sense, does not necessarily have causal connotations in the narrow sense. As a result, it is not clear whether Alexander indeed regards the soul and the inclinations as inner movers or as explanatory factors. The following passage from Alexander’s *De anima* helps clarify this matter:

For this reason, the body is not strictly speaking said to be moved by the soul, for this is said in those cases where the mover and the moved are separate, as in the case of oxen that move a wagon. But since also that which is moved in virtue of itself is more generally [κοινότερον] said to be moved by something (for in this way the craftsman [is moved] by art, i.e. in virtue of it, and in this way fire [is moved] by lightness), the animal is said to be moved by something.

---

49 The elements are not wholes according to Aristotle’s definition in *Metaphysics* 4 26, since the position of their parts makes no difference. Nevertheless, Alexander applies this argument to their case, since in his view the elements are bodies or composites of matter and form. On Aristotle’s and Alexander’s divergent views on this subject see R. W. Sharples, ‘On Being a τόδε τι in Aristotle and Alexander’, *Méthexis*, 8 (1999), 77–87. Further, my claim that Alexander presupposes Aristotle’s account of self-motion accords with his account of the appetitive part of the soul. Unlike Aristotle, Alexander holds that this part of the soul is not moved (DA 78. 24–5 Bruns).
Here Alexander clearly states that animate bodies and the elements are not strictly speaking moved by the soul and the inclinations, respectively, but in virtue of them. He does not explain the difference between these descriptions but his discussion offers two clues. First, his claim that things that are moved in virtue of themselves can be more generally described as being moved by themselves suggests that, in his view, the soul and the inclinations are in a sense active causes, otherwise the expression ‘being moved by’ would be altogether inapplicable to them, not merely inaccurate. Secondly, Alexander’s claim that the expression ‘being moved by’ holds strictly speaking for things that are moved by separate movers implies that the phrase ‘being moved in virtue of’ is applicable to cases where the mover and the moved are the same in substrate. This interpretation finds support in Alexander’s commentary on *Metaphysics* Δ 12. Here he characterizes the ‘dunamis in virtue of states’ (ἡ κατὰ τὰς ἕξεις δύναμις) as an internal causal factor, saying that it is ‘similar to active dunamis, differing from it in being active [ποιητική] not with respect to another thing but with respect to the bearer itself’ (394. 4–6 Hayduck). This view is central to Alexander’s account of forms. In his *De anima* he states that forms not only define bodies and differentiate them from other bodies but also explain the ways in which they act and are acted upon (7. 9–14 Bruns). This account distinguishes, in Alexander’s view, the Aristotelian account of activity and passivity from the Stoic and Platonic accounts. In his commentary on Aristotle’s *De sensu* he says that in Aristotle’s view neither bodies nor incorporeals act or are acted upon, as the Stoics and the Platonists respectively hold, but they do so in virtue of incorporeals (73. 18–21 Wendland).

This discussion highlights the point of contention between Alexander and Galen. It shows that Alexander’s claim that animate bodies and the elements are moved in virtue of the soul and
inclination is similar to Galen’s account of bodily activities, since in both accounts bodies have internal causal factors. But unlike Galen, Alexander is not agnostic about the substance of this internal cause; he views it as an incorporeal form that supervenes on the material constitution of bodies (De anima 5. 4–14; 10. 24–6; 24. 21–4; 25. 2–3; 26. 20–2 Bruns). Through this view, then, Alexander counters Galen’s criticism by arguing that inner movers are ontologically distinct entities, therefore apparent self-movers are moved by something. In so doing, he defends the thesis that anything that moves is moved by something but also rejects Galen’s interpretation of Aristotle that takes forms to be identical to the mixture of the four qualities (QAM 3. 3, 37. 16–19 Mueller = iv. 774 K.). Understood in this light, the debate between Alexander and Galen is restricted neither to the validity of Aristotle’s argument in Physics 7. 1 nor to the thesis that it establishes. Rather, hinging on whether the whole is similar to or different from its parts, this debate also concerns the foundations of Aristotle’s philosophy: the ontological distinction between form and matter.

An examination of Alexander’s brief discussion of elemental motion in the Refutation of Galen brings to light another theoretical implication of his debate with Galen. Here Alexander explains his claim that the elements are moved by their inclination through Aristotle’s account of elemental motion, claiming that the elements’ motion is caused also by an external thing, namely the light (i.e. air and fire) or heavy (i.e. water and earth) elements in actuality, that turns light or heavy elements in potentiality into heavy or light in actuality (67 a19–20 Carullah). This explanation reveals a significant difference between Alexander’s and Galen’s accounts of external causes. It shows that whereas in Alexander’s view the elements re-

51 Alexander explicitly rejects the view that the soul is a relative in Quaestio 2. 9. His arguments are reasonably applicable to the forms of inanimate bodies too.  
53 Richard Sorabji concludes from this passage that Alexander downplays the role of the external cause because he cites it as evidence that the inclination is the cause (R. Sorabji, The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 AD: A Sourcebook, ii. Physics (London, 2004), 327; Matter, Space, and Motion: Theories in Antiquity and their Sequel (Ithaca, NY, 1988), 224). The conclusion does not necessarily follow from this passage, since it may also imply that the inner cause derives its efficacy from the external cause. I show below that the latter understanding accords with Alexander’s general conception of causality.
ceive their capacity to move downward or upward from the external causes that make them heavy or light in actuality, in Galen’s view external causes do not endow homoeomerous bodies with their inner *dunamis*, and therefore they neither generate activities nor alter them in their own right. This explanation reflects Alexander’s general account of efficient causality. In his commentary on *Metaphysics* Δ 2 he explains Aristotle’s description of one of the senses of the term ‘cause’ as the *first* principle of change or rest (1013a29–30) as follows:

He adds ‘first’ because this is principally [μάλιστα] the efficient cause; for that which is inherent in the generated thing and thus makes the subsequent things has its cause from the thing that generated it. And even the organs do not have their motion from themselves [ἐξ αὑτῶν], but also in these the first cause is external to the generated thing. (349. 33–6 Hayduck)

Here Alexander states in general terms the conception of efficient causality that underlies his account of elemental motion. He holds that internal efficient causes depend on external efficient causes, just as the elements are moved by the inclination that they receive from their external mover.54 Apart from setting his account of elemental motion in the wider context of his conception of causality, this passage clarifies Alexander’s stance in the debate with Galen. It shows first that unlike Galen, Alexander regards external causes as the primary causes of motion, and second that he applies this view to bodily organs, holding that they are not moved from themselves, as Galen holds, but receive their motion from an external cause.55 So although Alexander shares with Galen the assumption that bodily organs are moved by internal movers and applies it to the elements, he holds, contrary to Galen, that these bodies are not self-movers for two reasons: (1) internal movers are distinct incorporeal entities, and (2) their bearers receive these inner causes from an external cause.


In conclusion, the debate between Alexander and Galen goes beyond the question of the validity of Aristotle’s argument in *Physics* 7.1. Galen’s claim that Aristotle’s argument is based on contradictory assumptions presupposes at the outset that certain things, i.e. homoeomerous parts, are not moved by something. This presupposition plays a central role in Galen’s medical theory, where these parts are considered the primary subjects of bodily activities and diseases, and follows from his general account of the causes of bodily activities. His criticism of Aristotle hinges on two features of this account: (1) his agnosticism about the substance of the active cohesive cause, which leads him to consider the *dunamis* only in relation to its effect, and (2) his view that external causes do not cause activities in their own right but they play a causal role only in alterations of activities, by transmitting alterations to the cohesive causes. In his reply to Galen, Alexander opposes precisely this account. Although he could reject Galen’s criticism merely by showing that Galen’s claim that the resting part assumption is contradictory does not entail that the inference that he criticizes is invalid, he argues that this assumption holds with no contradiction for continuous wholes. In so doing, he counters Galen’s assumption that if a whole homoeomerous body is in motion its parts must be in motion too, but also his account of inner active causes. He understands continuous wholes in the light of Aristotle’s analysis of self-movers and draws an ontological distinction, absent from Galen’s account, between incorporeal internal movers and moved bodies. Moreover, he avoids the consequence that things that are moved by internal movers are self-movers, by identifying the primary cause of their motion with an external efficient cause, in contrast to Galen’s account of antecedent and preceding causes. Thus understood, the debate between Alexander and Galen is far from being confined to the validity of Aristotle’s argument. It directly concerns Aristotle’s thesis that anything that moves is moved by something and indirectly his hylomorphism and his notion of efficient causality.

*Tel Aviv University*

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Caston, V. (trans. and comm.), *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On the Soul Part*


Kukkonen, T., ‘Alternatives to Alternatives: Approaches to Aristotle’s Arguments *per impossibile*’ [Alternatives to Alternatives’], *Vivarium*, 40.2 (2002), 137–73.


HUMANS are accountable for what they do and believe in a way that other animals are not. The Stoics held that this is because humans are rational, and in particular because they have the capacity for rational assent. But how exactly does the capacity for rational assent explain accountability? Our Stoic sources do not explicitly answer this question, but I argue that they suggest the following view. Humans are responsible for assenting (and withholding assent) just because of the way in which the capacity for assent is reason-responsive: you can assent (or withhold assent) for reasons, and if you know whether or not you should be assenting, you can be guided by this knowledge in either assenting or withholding assent.

This view, however, raises certain further questions. What is it about the nature of our capacity for assent that enables it to be reason-responsive in a way that other psychic capacities are not? Why can one assent for a reason, but not have an impression of something’s being the case for a reason? I argue that a basis for answering these questions can be found in a perhaps surprising source: ps.-Simplicius’ sixth-century commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima*. Ps.-Simplicius draws on the Neoplatonist notion of self-reversion to explain what is distinctive about the rational capacity for assent. His account, I claim, provides a basis for explaining the distinctively reason-responsive nature of our capacity for assent.

© Ursula Coope 2016

I would like to thank Victor Caston, Eyjolfur Emilsson, Terry Irwin, and Richard Sorabji for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. I am also grateful to the two anonymous readers for OSAP and to the author of a further set of anonymous comments. The paper has also been improved as a result of discussions following talks given at Oxford, Chicago, and Berlin. While working on this paper, I was supported by a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship.

In what follows, translations from the Greek and Latin are my own unless otherwise noted.
1. Rational assent and control in the Stoics

On the Stoic view, the two important elements in human action and cognition are assent (*sunkatathesis*, *adsensio*) and impression (*phantasia*, *visum*).¹ Chrysippus described an impression as an affection (*pathos*) in the soul.² An impression can be theoretical or practical: a theoretical impression presents things as being the case; a practical impression presents things as to be pursued or avoided. An impression can also be either sensory or non-sensory. Though many of your theoretical impressions arise from the senses, you can also have non-sensory theoretical impressions, such as the impression that a certain argument is valid, or the impression that $2+2=4$.³ Sextus Empiricus attributes to the Stoics the view that an impression is a passive affection (*peisis tis*), as opposed to assent, which is an activity (*energeia*) (*M*. 7. 237). As passive affections, your impressions are not directly subject to your control. Of course, you can deliberately act in such a way as to affect the contents of your impressions. Simple ways to do this include turning your head in a certain direction, opening your eyes, and perhaps rubbing them or squinting.⁴ Nevertheless, though you may voluntarily turn your head, open your eyes and rub them, once you have done all this, the impression you experience is simply a result of your being acted on in a certain way.

Non-human animals (and young children) are simply led to action by their impressions. Thus, if an animal has an impression of something as to be pursued, it will automatically have an impulse towards pursuing it and (provided nothing interferes) will act on

---


³ Sensory and non-sensory impressions are distinguished at D.L. 7. 51 (= *LS* 39A = *SVF* ii. 61). See S.E. *M*. 7. 242–6 (= *LS* 39G = *SVF* ii. 65).

⁴ As Sextus Empiricus remarks, reporting Stoic views, you can rub your eyes in an attempt to make your visual impression clearer (*M*. 7. 258–9 = *LS* 49K). Diogenes Laertius reports that according to the Stoics, you can also alter which impressions you experience by undergoing a process of training in some craft. When looking at a table, a skilled carpenter will have different impressions from someone who is unskilled. When hearing arguments, someone who is trained in syllogistic will have different impressions from someone who is not. (D.L. 7. 51 = *LS* 39A = *SVF* ii. 61.)
this impulse. Adult humans differ from other animals in that they do not respond in this automatic way to their impressions. They have a rational faculty of assent.\(^5\) This is a faculty which allows them to endorse, or to withhold endorsement from, their impressions.\(^6\) In assenting to a theoretical impression, a human being makes a judgement;\(^7\) in assenting to a practical impression, the human has an impulse (and will act on this impulse unless something intervenes).

Assenting, according to the Stoics, is under your direct control. Thus, we find in Cicero the report that ‘to these things that appear and are, so to speak, received by the senses, he [Zeno] adds assent of our minds, which he makes dependent on us and voluntary [\textit{in nobis positam et voluntariam}’ (Cic. \textit{Acad.} 1. 40=LS 40B=SVF i. 61). Similarly, Clement reports that ‘not only the Stoics but also the Platonists say that assent depends on us’ (is \textit{eph’ hēmin: Strom. 2. 12. 54–5}=SVF ii. 992).\(^8\) The fact that assent differs in this respect from having an impression is explained by Sextus Empiricus when he reports the Stoic view:

Now cognition [\textit{κατάληψις}], as one may learn from them, is ‘assent to the cognitive impression’ and this seems to be a twofold thing, one part of which is involuntary [\textit{ἀκούσιον}] and the other part of which is voluntary and dependent on our judgement [\textit{ἐπὶ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ κρίσει κείμενον}]. For the experience of an impression is unwilled [\textit{ἀβούλητον}], and being affected in this particular way (as, for instance, with a sense of whiteness when a colour presents itself, or with a sense of sweetness when something sweet is offered to his taste) does not depend on the person affected but rather on the cause of the impression [\textit{οὐκ ἐπὶ τῷ φαντασιοῦντι ἐκεῖτο ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τῷ φαντασιοῦντι}], whereas the act of assenting to this affection lies in the power of the person who receives the impression [\textit{τὸ δὲ συγκαταθέσθαι τούτῳ τῷ}]

\(^5\) According to some accounts, certain Stoic philosophers attributed assent to animals too (see Alex. Aphr. \textit{Quaest.} 3. 13, 107. 6–12 Bruns, and \textit{De fato} 183. 21–184. 5 Bruns). Even if this correctly represents the views of some Stoics, it is clear that all of them agreed that \textit{rational} assent is impossible for animals and that, since animals are carried along by their impressions, they do not have the power to withhold assent. If they assent, they do so automatically and invariably. See Sorabji, \textit{Animal}, 41, and B. Inwood, \textit{Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism [Action]} (Oxford, 1985), 77–8.

\(^6\) Exactly what is endorsed is not very clear: is it the impression itself, or instead a corresponding proposition? This question is helpfully discussed in Brennan, \textit{Life}, 54–8.

\(^7\) That is, a \textit{ὑπόληψις}, \textit{δόξα}, or \textit{κατάληψις}. See Bobzien, \textit{Determinism}, 240–1.

\(^8\) These passages are cited in J. Barnes, “‘Belief is up to us’” ['\textit{Up to us}'], \textit{Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society}, 106 (2006), 189–206.
Ursula Coope


To a modern ear, the claim that assent is ‘voluntary’ might suggest that we can assent or withhold assent at will, but this does not seem to have been the Stoic view. According to Epictetus, the nature of human understanding is to incline to the true, to be dissatisfied with the false, and to withhold judgement from the uncertain. 10 He takes this to show that you cannot assent to something which (all things considered) appears to you to be untrue. Epictetus concludes that anyone who assents to something false does so without meaning to (οὐκ ἤθελεν ψεύδει συγκαταθέσθαι, Diss. 1. 28. 4). You cannot, for instance, obey a command to stop believing that it is day (given that it is day and this is evident); nor can you obey a command to believe (or to stop believing) that the number of stars is even (Diss. 1. 28. 3). 11 Sextus Empiricus reports a Stoic view that a certain type of impression (the cognitive impression) is so evident and striking that it ‘all but seizes us by the hair’ and drags us to assent (M. 7. 257=LS 40K, trans. LS). 12 Whether or not this implies that such impressions compel our assent has been disputed. 13 But even if there is not strict ‘compulsion’ here, the view described leaves no room for believing at will. You might be held back from assenting because

9 Although at the beginning of the passage he is talking about a particular type of impression (a cognitive impression), I take it that in what follows he means to be drawing a general distinction between impression and assent.

10 Diss. 1. 28. 2–3. Although, as we shall see below, Epictetus differs in some significant ways from the older Stoics, in making this claim about the nature of our understanding he seems to be expressing a view with which they would have agreed. At Diss. 1. 18. 1 he ascribes a similar view to ‘the philosophers’ (presumably referring to the older Stoics). They held, he says, that there is one principle that governs our assent: we assent to what we experience as being so, we dissent from what we experience as not being so, and we suspend judgement from what we experience as uncertain.

11 Epictetus’ actual words are that one cannot obey the command to ‘experience’ (πάθε) that it is night or to deny the experience (ἀπόπαθε) that it is day, but his point must be that one cannot assent to such things in response to a command, since he takes these observations about how one can or cannot respond to commands to show that no one willingly assents to what is false.

12 Sextus attributes this view to the younger Stoics. C. Brittain argues convincingly that it was also the view of the older Stoics. See his ‘The Compulsions of Stoic Assent’ [‘Compulsions’], in M.-K. Lee (ed.), Strategies of Argument: Essays in Ancient Ethics, Epistemology, and Logic (New York, 2014), 332–55 at 339.

of your prior beliefs or because you have reason temporarily to distrust your faculties, but you cannot refrain from assenting simply because you decide you would prefer not to have a certain belief.

When they say that assenting is voluntary, the Stoics are claiming that the power you exercise in assenting (and in withholding assent) is of such a kind as to make you responsible for whether or not you assent. Appearances may be misleading, and other people can attempt more or less successfully to deceive you, but whether you are deceived is still in an important sense down to you. This human power to assent to, or withhold assent from, impressions explains why adult humans are held responsible for their actions and beliefs but animals and young children are not held responsible in the same way.

You are not responsible for your impressions in the direct way that you are responsible for your assent. You can, of course, be indirectly responsible for having a certain impression: you can be responsible for training yourself to have that impression (or for failing to train yourself to have a different impression). But this kind of responsibility itself depends on your responsibility for assenting or withholding assent: you are responsible for such impressions because you are responsible for your intentional actions (e.g. for the action of training yourself), and you are responsible for those intentional actions because you are responsible for assenting to the corresponding impression (e.g. for assenting to, or withholding assent from, the impression that it would be appropriate to train yourself).

However, this account of responsibility leaves us with a question. What is it about the power for assenting (and for withholding

---

14 A story about Menelaus was cited as an example of refusing to assent to a cognitive impression because of prior false beliefs. Menelaus falsely believed Helen to be imprisoned in his ship and so could not believe his eyes when he saw her in front of him (S.E. M. 7. 255–6). Brittain, ‘Compulsions’, 342–6, argues that a Stoic sage might withhold assent from a cognitive impression because he had grounds for temporarily distrusting his faculties (because he was aware of the fact that he was suffering from a temporary illness, for instance).

15 Thus your intentional actions are voluntary in a derivative sense, just because they arise from voluntary assent. This explains why, on the Stoic view, it is a mistake to think that your φ-ing can only be voluntary if whether or not you φ depends on your decision or choice. It is true that an action can only be voluntary if the agent was (at the time of action) able to decide whether or not to perform it, but this is true just because deciding to act is assenting to a practical impression and the voluntariness of action is derivative from the voluntariness of assent. On the Stoic view, it would be a mistake to take this as a sign that voluntariness quite generally depends upon decision. It would thus be a mistake to suppose that the fact that assent is voluntary implies that we can assent or withhold assent at will.
assent) that makes you responsible for exercises of this power in a way that you are not responsible for having impressions? It is surprisingly difficult to find an explicit answer to this question in our Stoic sources. In defending the claim that human beings are responsible for assenting, the Stoics argue that the primary cause of your assenting is your character and that when you assent, you could always have withheld your assent. But although these arguments do shed some light on the sense in which (for the Stoics) your assent depends on you, they do not by themselves explain what it is about assenting that makes you responsible for your assent in a way that you are not responsible for having impressions.

This is not a criticism of these Stoic arguments. These arguments are not designed to answer our question about the difference between assenting and having impressions, but rather to answer a particular objection to the Stoic view: the objection that your supposed responsibility for your assent is incompatible with that assent’s being caused by things external to you. In response to this objection, Chrysippus claims that impressions can causally influence assent without forcing it. Though your impressions prompt you to assent, the main cause of your assent is something internal to you: the disposition of your mind, understood as your moral character. Thus, in a situation in which two people are experiencing the same impressions, their reactions will differ in accordance with their characters: someone whose mental dispositions are healthy and beneficial will have different reactions from someone who is ‘uncouth, uneducated, and uncultured and not supported by any good character qualities’. If the main cause of your assent is your character, then your impressions do not force your assent. According to Cicero, Chrysippus concluded that ‘although the impression encountered will print and, as it were, emblazon its...
appearance on the mind, assent will be in our power’ (Cic. De fato 43 = LS 62C = SVF ii. 974, trans. from LS).

Chrysippus’ account of modality allows him to add that your assent, though caused, is not necessitated: when you assent, it was possible for you not to assent; when you withhold assent, it was possible for you to assent. According to Chrysippus, the claim ‘X is F’ is possible just in case (1) being something of X’s kind is compatible with being F (that is, the claim ‘admits of being true’) and in addition (2) there are no external factors preventing X from being F (that is, the claim ‘is not prevented by external factors from being true’: D.L. 7. 75 = LS 38D, trans. LS). This account of possibility implies that when a human being assents to something, withholding assent was possible (and when she withholds assent, assenting was possible). To see why, consider the claims ‘X assents’ and ‘X withholds her assent’. Both of these claims admit of being true, since either assenting or withholding assent is compatible with being the kind of thing X is (a human being); and in addition, nothing external can prevent either of these claims from being true, since external factors do not prevent one either from assenting or from withholding assent (as is shown by the fact that in the same circumstances someone with a different character would have assented differently).

Neither of these arguments explains why responsibility attaches to assent in a way that it does not attach to having impressions. There are two main questions they leave unanswered. First of all, in a human being certain impressions also depend on character and on learnt dispositions. For example, the Stoics hold that the expert will have different impressions from the non-expert. Moreover, given this fact, Chrysippus’ account of possibility implies that it is

---

19 In this paragraph I follow Bobzien, Determinism, esp. 112–16 and 310–13 (see also pp. 119–22 for her defence of the attribution of this view to Chrysippus).

20 For example, ‘Dio is walking today’ is possible just in case (1) being human (that is, being the kind of thing Dio is) is compatible with walking (in a way that, say, being a tree or a fish would not be) and (2) there is nothing external that prevents Dio from walking today (for example, he is not chained down).

21 The question of whether this account of possibility provides the basis for a convincing defence of Stoic compatibilism is beyond the scope of this paper. For some doubts see T. Brennan, ‘Fate and Free Will in Stoicism’, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 21 (2001), 259–86 at 268–71.

22 See D.L. 7. 51 (= LS 39A = SVF ii. 61, trans. LS): ‘Some impressions are expert [τεχνικαί] and others not: a work of art is viewed in one way by an expert and differently by a non-expert.’
possible (in such cases) for you to experience different impressions from those you in fact experience. Why, then, are you responsible for your assent in a way that you are not responsible even for this kind of expert impression? The Stoics might perhaps reply that your character and dispositions are the main cause of your assent but not the main cause of your impressions. But this reply seems to depend upon the explanation we are seeking, instead of providing us with this explanation. To explain the sense in which your character is the main cause of your assent but not of your impressions, we would need already to have an explanation of the fact that you are accountable for your assent in a way that you are not accountable for your impressions.

The second question left unanswered by Chrysippus’ arguments about character and modality concerns the difference between human beings and trainable animals. Some non-rational animals can be trained. If non-rational animals lack the ability to assent, then

---

23 For instance, in a situation in which you, as a carpenter, are having an expert impression of a table, it is possible for you to be having a non-expert impression. (You are not prevented by external circumstances from having such an impression, and having such an impression is clearly compatible with being human.)

24 There is, of course, an important difference between assenting and having impressions. The nature of the faculty of assent ensures that external circumstances never force us to give or withhold our assent: the power we exercise in assenting is a two-way power (a power to assent or not) and whether we assent depends on our character. (Bobzien makes this point: Determinism, 286–7.) By contrast, our ability to have impressions is not a two-way power, and we can be externally forced to have certain impressions. This shows that it will always be possible, on encountering certain impressions, to assent otherwise than one does, but it will not always be possible, on encountering external objects, to undergo impressions that are other than those one in fact undergoes. That would explain why we do not always have power over our impressions, but it does not explain why we lack such control in those cases in which our impressions depend on our character and hence are not necessitated by things that are external to us.

25 This point is made by Philoponus in his commentary on Aristotle’s De anima (In DA 488. 36–489. 6; 497. 2–14; 500. 25–33 Hayduck). (The authorship of this commentary on De anima 3 has been disputed. For a defence of the claim that it is in fact written by Philoponus see P. Golitsis, ‘John Philoponus on the Third Book of Aristotle’s De anima, Wrongly Attributed to Stephanus’, forthcoming in R. Sorabji (ed.), Aristotle Reinterpreted: New Findings on Seven Hundred Years of the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle (London, 2016).) Philoponus says that the horse that has been trained to respond to the whip has a kind of non-rational assent, and he contrasts this with rational assent, which (he says) requires being persuaded. Ps.-Simplicius also takes up the question of how animals can be trained, given that they lack rationality. He says that some animals have a kind of rationality, in that they can be habituated by other beings. This is not the same as human rationality: it does not, for instance, include the ability to deliberate, and it does not enable the animal to train or habituate itself. But such animals, in virtue of their ability to be trained by humans,
the way in which training affects an animal must be by modifying its dispositions to experience impressions. But then, just as your assent depends on your character, so also which impressions a trained animal has when faced with a certain set of external circumstances will depend on something internal to it: the dispositions it has acquired through training. Moreover, Chrysippus’ account of possibility implies that in cases in which an animal could be trained, it could have impressions other than those that it in fact has. Why, then, is a human being responsible for her assenting in a way that a trainable animal is not responsible for its impressions? Again, the Stoics have a possible reply. The trained dispositions of an animal are importantly different from the dispositions that make up a human character: the former are dispositions for having impressions, the latter are (or at least include) dispositions to assent. But again this reply presupposes an answer to our question about the difference between assenting and having impressions. To explain the significance of the difference between these two kinds of disposition, we need to know why assenting matters for responsibility in a way that having impressions does not.

None of our Stoic sources explicitly answers this question about why we are responsible for our assent in a way we are not responsible for our impressions. But an answer can, I think, be inferred from what these sources say about the nature of assenting and about how assenting differs from merely having an impression.

On the Stoic view, dispositions to assent are not mere tendencies to go along with certain impressions. To assent is to make an evaluative judgement. When we assent (or withhold assent), we use concepts such as ‘true’ or ‘false’, ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’ to assess our impressions, and we reject or accept these impressions in the light of this assessment. This evaluative judging is what the Stoics have something in common with rational animals. According to ps.-Simplicius, their existence supports the view that there is no sudden transition in nature between the rational and the non-rational (ps.-Simpl. In DA 308. 15 ff. Hayduck).

26 Suppose, for instance, that horses can be trained to keep their place in the battle line. One particular horse, however, is untrained, and so it bolts. Having the kind of impressions that would lead it to stay in its place is compatible with its nature qua horse, and there is nothing in its external circumstances that prevents it from having such impressions (as is shown by the fact that a different, trained horse would have impressions that led it to stay in its place in the same circumstances). In these circumstances, then, it is possible for the horse to have impressions that are other than those it in fact has.
take to be beyond the capacity of non-human animals. As Origen puts it: ‘A rational animal . . . in addition to its impressionistic nature, has reason which passes judgement on impressions [τὸν κρίνοντα τὰς φαντασίασ], rejecting some of these and accepting others, in order that the animal may be guided accordingly’ (Origen, Princ. 3. 1. 3=LS 53A=SVF ii. 988, trans. from LS).

What is the difference between making such an evaluative judgement and simply having a higher-order impression (an impression about the merits of one’s own impression)? A key difference, I shall argue, is that judgements are reason-responsive in a way that impressions are not. Because of the way in which assenting is reason-responsive, the capacity for assent makes possible both a certain distinctive kind of success and a certain distinctive kind of failure.

The distinctive kind of success is illustrated by the case of the sage. The sage’s assent always amounts to knowledge: he only assents to cognitive (katalēptikai) impressions and his assent to these impressions is firm and unchangeable by argument. The unshakeability that characterizes the sage’s assent must be distinguished from the imperviousness to argument that characterizes either a stubborn fool or a non-rational animal. The sage is not simply unaffected by arguments; he refuses to withdraw his assent because he understands that the reasons he has been given for doing so are inadequate. That is, in continuing to assent he is guided by his understanding of what are and are not good reasons for assenting or for withholding assent.

The fact that assenting (or withholding assent) can be an exercise of such understanding is brought out by two alternative de-

---

27 This is partly because only humans possess evaluative concepts (such as true, false, appropriate, inappropriate). It might, then, be suggested that adult humans are rightly held responsible because, unlike animals, they possess these concepts. But although this is surely part of the explanation, it does not account for the difference between impression and assent within a human being, such that assenting is in our power but having an impression is not. A human being’s impressions are influenced by her possession of evaluative concepts. Thus, she can have the impression that something is true or appropriate. The difference must depend on the fact that in assenting one uses one’s evaluative concepts to make a judgement about how things are.

28 For the view that the sage, in assenting, never has mere opinion (δόξα) but only has knowledge see S.E. M. 7. 151–2 (=LS 41C) and Stob. 2. 111. 19–112. 2 (=LS 41G=SVF iii. 548). A cognitive impression is one which is ‘true and of such a kind that it could not turn out false’ (S.E. M. 7. 152=LS 41C, trans. LS). Knowledge is a κατάληψις that is ‘sure and firm and unchangeable by argument’ (ἀσφαλῆ καὶ βεβαίαν καὶ ἀμετάθετον ὑπὸ λόγου: S.E. M. 7. 151=LS 41C). See also the similar accounts of knowledge in ps.-Galen, Def. med. 7, xix. 350 K. (=SVF ii. 93), and Cic. Acad. 1. 41 (=LS 41B=SVF i. 60).
scriptions, in our sources, of the sage’s virtue of non-precipitancy (*aproptōsia*), a virtue that is part of dialectic. One source describes non-precipitancy as ‘the science [*epistēmē*] of when one should or should not assent’ (D.L. 7. 46=LS 31B=SVF ii. 130, trans. LS); another describes it as ‘a disposition not to assent in advance of cognition’ (P.Herc. 1020, col. iv, col. i=LS 41D=SVF ii. 131, trans. from LS). If we put these two descriptions together, we arrive at the view that the sage’s disposition to assent only when he should just is his understanding of when one should or should not assent. This is possible just because the sage, in assenting or withholding assent, is guided by his understanding of when one should or should not assent. This view thus assumes that assenting (and withholding assent) is the kind of activity that can be guided by such understanding. Of course, in a way this assumption is wholly unremarkable. But it is unremarkable only because we tend to take for granted the fact that assenting differs in this respect from having an impression. In having (or ceasing to have) an impression you cannot, in the same sense, be guided by your understanding of whether or not you *should* have that impression.

The non-sage lacks this kind of understanding, but nevertheless he is, like the sage, able to assent or withhold assent for reasons. The fact that he has this ability to assent (or withhold assent) for reasons makes him both distinctively vulnerable and also distinctively capable of improvement. Since he lacks knowledge, the non-sage assents weakly: unlike the sage, he can be persuaded by argument to withdraw his assent. This ability to be persuaded makes him

---

29 Quite how broadly this should be understood has been disputed. Is it knowledge of when one should or should not assent *quite generally*, or only of when one should or should not assent *in response to argument*? For my purposes, nothing hangs on this question. For useful discussion see L. Castagnoli, ‘How Dialectical was Stoic Dialectic?’, in A. Nightingale and D. Sedley (eds.), *Ancient Models of Mind: Studies in Human and Divine Rationality* (Cambridge, 2010), 153–79 at 168.

30 There is reason to think that both these sources reflect the views of Chrysippus, and hence that they are two alternative statements of one and the same view of non-precipitancy (rather than being reports of two rival views). A. A. Long, ‘Dialectic and the Stoic Sage’ ['Dialectic'], in J. M. Rist (ed.), *The Stoics* (Berkeley, 1978), 101–24 at 108–9, argues that Diogenes Laertius is here reporting the views of Chrysippus. For a defence of the claim that the Herculaneum papyrus is a work either of Chrysippus or of one of his immediate followers see H. von Arnim, ‘Über einen stoischen Papyrus der Herculaneensichen Bibliothek’, *Hermes*, 25 (1890), 473–95 at 489–95. The fact that these two passages are our only sources which use the word ‘non-precipitancy’ (*ἀπροπτωσία*) also suggests that they both reflect the views of the same philosopher.

31 This is implied by the claim that the non-sage, even when he assents to a cog-
vulnerable, since he can be misled by argument into either giving or withdrawing his assent for bad reasons. To assent or withhold assent for bad reasons is to fail in a distinctively human way. His ability to be persuaded by argument also provides the non-sage with a distinctively human possibility for improvement. Since he can be led by argument to recognize and respond to good reasons for assenting and for withholding assent, he can be rationally persuaded to withdraw a previous mistaken assent and to assent to something different instead. Diogenes Laertius reports the Stoic view that the non-sage can correct his judgements by studying syllogistic: ‘The study of syllogisms is extremely useful; for it reveals what is demonstrative, and this contributes greatly towards making right one’s judgements \([\pi\rho\delta\ δι\ ο\rho\theta\ω\σ\υν \ τ\ω\ν \ δογ\μ\α\των]\)’ (D.L. 7. 45). Again, this is a kind of improvement that depends on having the capacity for assent. Having (and ceasing to have) impressions is not something one can do for reasons (whether good or bad).\textsuperscript{32}

I want to suggest that these differences between assenting and having impressions explain the Stoics’ claim that you are directly accountable for your assent in a way that you are not accountable for your impressions. You are directly accountable for your assent just because in assenting (or withholding assent) you can be guided by reasons that tell in favour of assenting (or withholding assent).\textsuperscript{33} The sage can be guided by knowledge of whether or not he should assent; the non-sage, though not guided by such knowledge, can be influenced by considerations that tell in favour of assenting or of withholding assent. When the Stoics say that assenting is in your power in a way that having impressions is not, what they mean, I suggest, is that in assenting (or withholding assent) you can exercise a certain kind of rational control: you can assent (or withhold assent) because you think there is good reason to do so; you can

\textsuperscript{32} You can, of course, act for a reason in such a way as to bring it about that you have certain impressions, but in that case it is your action rather than the impression itself that is based on a reason. What makes it possible for your action to be based on a reason is just that the assent that prompted it is based on a reason.

\textsuperscript{33} This is not to claim that whenever you assent you assent for reasons. The point is that the strength or weakness of any act of assenting (whether or not it is an act of assenting for a reason) depends on certain counterfactuals about how the agent would respond to arguments purporting to present reasons for withholding assent.
refuse to withdraw your assent because you think there is no good reason to withdraw your assent.\textsuperscript{34}

This is, of course, a rather minimal type of control. As we have seen, for those of us who are not sages this very capacity to assent for reasons can itself lead to error. One might wonder, then, whether this capacity can really be what explains our accountability for our beliefs and our actions. After all, it is possible to have this capacity but be unable to exercise it \textit{well}. Consider, for instance, someone who has been indoctrinated in such a way that she reasons badly: she assents and withholds assent on the basis of reasons, but she is able to recognize the force of only a very limited range of reasons. Must we really conclude that such a person is blameworthy? The Stoics, I suspect, would have been untroubled by this conclusion. But for those modern readers who are squeamish about such a readiness to assign blame, it is worth noting that the Stoic view that we are accountable for our assent does not \textit{by itself} imply that every mistaken act of assent is blameworthy. It implies only that assenting is the \textit{kind} of activity that is appropriately praised, blamed, or excused. Whether any particular mistaken act of assent should be blamed or excused will depend on further factors.\textsuperscript{35}

I have argued that, on the Stoic view, we are responsible for assenting (and withholding assent) just because assenting (and withholding assent) can be the exercise of a certain kind of rational control. This view depends upon the fact that the capacity for assenting is fundamentally different in kind from the capacity for having impressions: in exercising our capacity for assent we can

\textsuperscript{34} If this is right, then the Stoic view finds an echo in the writings of certain modern philosophers. For example, Richard Moran claims that we are active in relation to our judgement-sensitive attitudes (such as beliefs and certain desires), and he contrasts this with our passivity in relation to our sensations (\textit{Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge} (Princeton, 2001), 113–20). See also Gary Watson’s claim that having ‘doxastic control’ amounts to having one’s beliefs determined by ‘belief-relevant norms’: ‘our cognitive lives would be out of control to the extent we were incapable of responding to the norms of coherence and relevant evidence’ (G. Watson, ‘The Work of the Will’, in id., \textit{Agency and Answerability: Selected Essays} (Oxford, 2004) 123–57 at 144).

\textsuperscript{35} Angela Smith makes just this point in defending her account of responsibility, on which we are responsible for those attitudes and reactions that reflect our evaluative judgements (‘Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life’, \textit{Ethics}, 115.2 (2005), 236–71 at 266). This is, she says, giving an account of ‘the conditions under which something can be attributed to a person in the way that is required in order for it to be a basis for moral appraisal of that person. Merely claiming that a person is responsible for something . . . does not by itself settle the question of what appraisal, if any, should be made of the person on the basis of it.’
be guided by reasons for assenting, but in exercising our capacity for having impressions we cannot be guided in this way. However, if this is the Stoic account, it invites certain further questions. What exactly does this difference between assenting and having impressions amount to? What is \( \phi \)-ing \emph{for a reason}, and why can ‘\( \phi \)-ing’ here stand for ‘assenting’ but not for ‘having an impression’? You can, after all, have new impressions as a result of listening to arguments. Why does \emph{that} not count as \emph{being persuaded to have those impressions} or as \emph{having those impressions for a reason}? Again, what is it for the sage’s assenting to be \emph{guided by knowledge of when one should assent}, and why can his impressions not also be guided by such knowledge? More generally, what is it about the nature of our capacities for assenting and for having impressions that explains these differences between them?

In the remainder of this paper I shall look at a particular way of explaining these differences between our capacity for having impressions and our capacity for assent. A hint of this explanation can already be found in the writings of the late Stoic Epictetus, though I shall argue that this hint is only fully developed in the Neoplatonist ps.-Simplicius’ commentary on Aristotle’s \textit{De anima}. According to ps.-Simplicius’ account, our power of assent is special in that it can be exercised in a distinctively self-reflexive way. I shall not attempt a full defence of the view that emerges from this account, but I shall argue that it does suggest an interesting answer to our questions about the distinctive nature of our capacity for assent.

2. What is special about reason? A suggestion in Epictetus

Like the earlier Stoics, Epictetus holds that assenting is under our control in a way that experiencing impressions is not. Impressions ‘are neither voluntary nor subject to one’s control \([\textit{non voluntatis sunt neque arbitrariae}]\), but through a certain power of their own they force their recognition upon men’; whereas the assents by which these impressions are recognized are ‘voluntary and occur subject to human control \([\textit{voluntariae sunt fiuntque hominum arbitratu}]\).\(^{36}\)

However, Epictetus differs from the earlier Stoics in that his notion of what depends on us (what is \emph{eph’ hēmin}) is narrower than

\(^{36}\) From Gell. 19. 1. 15–16 (Gellius’ report of the fifth book of Epictetus’ \textit{Disser- tationes}), trans. Rolfe, modified.
For Epictetus, something only counts as *depending on the agent* if nothing external to the agent *could* interfere with it. Because of this, he denies that the physical actions prompted by our assent depend on us. Instead, what depends on us is just the ‘use of our impressions’ (that is, assenting, withholding assent, and having the beliefs and impulses that follow upon assent). This is the only activity that cannot be interfered with or prevented. This difference between Epictetus and earlier Stoics partly arises from a difference in their motivations for discussing the notion of what ‘depends on us’. Epictetus’ primary concern in these discussions tends not to be allocating responsibility for our acts, but rather providing advice about how to avoid frustration and disappointment. If you only desire things that depend on you (in Epictetus’ narrow sense), then your desires will never be frustrated by external circumstances (*Enchiridion*, ch. 2). As he says, no one can prevent you from assenting to what is true or force you to assent to what is false (*Diss.* 1. 17. 22–3).

There is, then, an easy answer to the question of why *in Epictetus’ sense of ‘depends upon us’* assenting depends upon us whereas having impressions does not. As we have seen, the nature of assenting ensures that external circumstances cannot force you to assent: the main cause of assenting or withholding assent is always your character.

---


38 Thus, at *Ench.* 1. 1–2 Epictetus gives the following list of things that depend on us and hence are our deeds (*ἐργα*): ‘supposition, impulse, desire, inclination, aversion’. At *Diss.* 1. 1. 7 (=LS 62K) he says that ‘the one thing which the gods have made dependent on us is the one of supreme importance, the correct use of impressions. The other things they have not made dependent on us’ (trans. after LS). At *Diss.* 3. 24. 69–70 he asks ‘What is your own?’ and answers ‘The use of impressions’. This is your own, he says, because no one can interfere with it. See also *Diss.* 4. 1. 72–3. I take passages such as these to support the interpretation I give here (see also Bobzien, *Determinism*, 331–8). For a contrary interpretation, on which Epictetus’ view is much closer to that of the older Stoics, see R. Salles, ‘Epictetus and the Causal Conception of Moral Responsibility and What is *epi’ hēmin*’ [*’Epictetus*’], in P. Destrée, R. Salles, and M. Zingano (eds.), *What is up to us? Studies in Agency and Responsibility in Ancient Philosophy* (Sankt Augustin, 2014), 169–82. On Salles’s interpretation, Epictetus would face just the same question about assent that I raised for the earlier Stoics (since if Salles is right, Epictetus cannot help himself to the ‘easy answer’ I suggest for him below).

39 This is not to deny that Epictetus was also interested in questions of responsibility, as Salles emphasizes (*’Epictetus’,* 174–9). Salles cites, in particular, *Diss.* 1. 11. 27–37.

40 See n. 24 above.
an impression that rules out the possibility that certain impressions are forced upon you by external circumstances. If what depends upon us must be the kind of thing that cannot be interfered with by external circumstances, then whether or not we assent will depend upon us, but which impressions we have will not.

If this were all Epictetus had to say about the way in which assenting depends on us, then his account would not help to answer the questions I raised for the earlier Stoics. It would not, for instance, help to explain why assenting, unlike having an impression, is the kind of thing one can do for a reason or in the light of knowledge of whether one should assent. However, Epictetus also has more to say about the way in which our power for assenting differs from our power for having impressions. Our power for assent, he says, is uniquely capable of a certain kind of self-reflexive exercise.

Epictetus’ Dissertationes begin with a chapter on what ‘depends upon us’. He claims that reason, which he characterizes as ‘the power of making correct use of impressions’ (that is, of correctly assenting to or withholding assent from impressions), is the only faculty the exercise of which wholly depends upon us. What is special about reason, he explains, is that it is the only power that can be exercised self-reflexively: no other faculty can contemplate itself, and therefore no other faculty can approve or disapprove of itself;[41] reason ‘alone takes thought both for itself [καὶ αὐτὴν κατανοήσουσα παρείληπται] (what it is, what it can do, and how valuable it has come to be) and also for other faculties’ (Diss. 1. 1. 4–5).[42] We need to ask why it is relevant to make this point about reason’s being uniquely self-reflexive in a chapter about what depends upon us. Does this fact about reason add anything to Epictetus’ other claims about the sense in which exercises of reason (in assenting or withholding assent) are uniquely in our power?

Epictetus defends his claim that reason is uniquely self-reflexive in Dissertationes 1. 20.[43] Other powers, he says, are directed at things that are distinct from (and differ in kind from) themselves.

[41] τῶν ἄλλων δινάμεων οὐδεμίαν εὑρήσετε αὐτὴν αὐτῆς θεωρητικὴν, οὐ τοίνυν οὐδὲ δοκιμαστικὴν ἤ ἀποδοκιμαστικὴν (Diss. 1. 1. 1).
[42] For this view see also Marc. Aur. Med. 11. 1. 1: ‘These are the properties of the rational soul: it sees itself, analyses itself, and makes itself such as it chooses’ (τὰ ἰδία τῆς λογικῆς ψυχῆς· ἑαυτὴν ὁρᾷ, ἑαυτὴν διαρθροῖ, ἑαυτὴν ὅποιαν ἂν βούληται ποιεῖ; trans. G. Long).
For instance, the art of shoemaking has to do with leather, but the art itself is not composed of leather. The art of grammar has to do with written speech, but the art itself is not made up of written speech. Because of this, neither the art of shoemaking nor the art of grammar can operate upon itself.\footnote{It might be objected here that the rules of grammar can be applied to the statements that articulate the rules of grammar. For example (as an anonymous reader pointed out to me), the statement ‘a verb always agrees with its subject’ is itself in accord with the very rule of grammar it is articulating. When he denies that grammar operates on itself, Epictetus must be distinguishing between grammar itself and the statements by which the rules of grammar are articulated in language. On his view, the fact that the rules of grammar can be used to judge such statements does not show that grammar can ‘operate on itself’.} Reason, on the other hand, is in a certain sense ‘of the same kind as’ (\textit{homoeidēs} with) its subject-matter. The task of reason is the proper use of impressions, but reason is itself ‘a system from certain impressions’ (\textit{sústēma ek poiōn fantasiaōn}). Because of this, Epictetus says, reason is ‘contemplative of itself’ (\textit{αὐτοῦ θεωρητικός}), as well as of other things (\textit{Diss}. 1. 20. 5).

It is not entirely clear what Epictetus means by calling reason ‘a system from certain impressions’, or how this relates to the older, Chrysippean claim that reason is a collection of concepts.\footnote{Galen tells us that Chrysippus described reason (\textit{lógos}) as ‘a collection of concepts and preconceptions [\textit{énnoiai} and \textit{προλήψεις}]’ (\textit{PHP} 5. 3. 160, p. 421 M. = \textit{SVF} ii. 841).} He could be using ‘impression’ (\textit{phantasia}) broadly here, in such a way that concepts (\textit{ennoiai}) also count as impressions of a kind.\footnote{Long suggests this in \textit{Epictetus}, 130 n. 3, and cites Plut. \textit{Comm. not.} 1084 F–1085 A (=\textit{LS} 39F=\textit{SVF} ii. 847), where concepts are classified as ‘a kind of impression’.} Alternatively, the ‘from’ (\textit{ek}) could have a temporal rather than a compositional sense, and his claim could be that reason is a system of concepts that is \textit{developed out of} certain impressions. Either way, the conclusion he wants to draw from this claim about the relation between impressions and reason is that any faculty that can assess the impressions must also be able to assess reason. Thus, the faculty of reason, since it is what assesses the impressions, must also be capable of assessing itself. Epictetus goes on to make a similar point about wisdom (\textit{phronēsis}). Wisdom contemplates what is good and bad, but since it itself is good, in contemplating what is good and bad it must also contemplate itself and its opposite (\textit{Diss}. 1. 20. 6).\footnote{This argument that reason, unlike other arts, is self-reflexive has its roots in Plato. See \textit{Charm}. 165 c–169 c; \textit{Euthyd.} 291 d–293 a. Cicero also takes up this ar-}
We are now in a position to understand the significance of this claim that reason can evaluate itself. Epictetus’ point seems to be that you can always reflect upon your own assenting (and withholding of assent) and judge whether you are right to be assenting (or to be withholding assent). The claim is that you can evaluate each act of assent (or of withholding assent), not that you actually do evaluate every such act. If Epictetus held that you must evaluate every act of assent, he would be committed to an infinite regress of acts of evaluation (since each act of evaluation itself involves a distinct act of assenting or of withholding assent). Instead, Epictetus says that each act of assent can be reassessed and endorsed or rejected.

This is only possible, he argues, because reason (the faculty by which we assent or withhold assent) is capable of assessing its own operation. Reason has to be self-reflexive in this way if an infinite regress of powers is to be avoided. If every act of assent (or withholding assent) is evaluable, then either there is one power which enables us both to assent and to evaluate that act of assent, or our capacity for evaluating that assent depends on the possession of a further power. If the capacity for evaluating the original assent depended upon the possession of a further power, that further power would also have to be a power for assenting (since to evaluate something is to exercise a power of assenting or withholding assent), so the operation of that further power would also have to be evaluable (given the assumption that every act of assenting or withholding assent is evaluable). The operation of this further power would, then, need to be evaluated either by itself (in which case it would be a power capable of evaluating its own operation) or by yet a further power, and so on (Diss. 1. 17. 1–4).

Epictetus concludes that if argument, claiming, at Fin. 3. 24–5 (=LS 64H=SVF iii. 11), that ‘wisdom is wholly directed towards itself, which is not the case with other arts’. In Acad. 2. 91 Cicero spells out the sense in which reason ‘judges itself’: reason enables the philosopher to judge ‘which conjunctions and disjunctions are true, which statements are ambiguous; what follows from something and what is incompatible with it’ (trans. C. Brittain, Cicero: On Academic Scepticism (Indianapolis and Cambridge, 2006)), and in doing so, reason judges itself.

48 Of course, this implies that the series of assents is potentially infinite: for any assent, there can be a further assent that endorses it. But Epictetus takes a potential infinite of this kind to be unproblematic, so long as it does not imply an actually infinite series of powers for assent.

49 Epictetus argues first that what evaluates reason must itself be a kind of reasoning power, and then that if no reasoning power were capable of evaluating itself there would have to be infinitely many such reasoning powers. His argument seems vul-
every act of assent (or withholding assent) is evaluable, there must be a single power that is capable of evaluating its own use.

These remarks about the self-reflexivity of reason suggest a new answer to our question about the difference between assenting and having an impression. Epictetus—I take it—is claiming not merely that the power assenting happens also to be uniquely self-reflexive, but rather that there is an essential connection between its being self-reflexive in this way and its being a power for assenting: an activity counts as assenting only if it is an exercise of such a self-reflexive power. If this is right, then assenting differs from having an impression in the following way. Assenting (or withholding assent) implies having the ability to evaluate one’s act of assent (or of withholding assent), whereas having an impression does not imply having the ability to evaluate one’s impression (or indeed, having the ability to form any kind of meta-attitude towards it).

As we have seen, Epictetus makes this point about the self-reflexivity of reason right at the start of a chapter on ‘what depends on us’. We can now see why he thinks the two topics are connected. The rational power of assenting, because of its self-reflexive nature, provides you with the ability to re-evaluate any of your acts of assenting (or of withholding assent). You can reflect on any of your beliefs and ask ‘is it really true?’ Or you can reflect on anything you are about to do and ask ‘is this really an appropriate thing to be doing?’ Having this ability for re-evaluation is a necessary condition for exercising a certain kind of control over what you do or believe: you need to be able to re-evaluate your beliefs and intentions in order to have the capacity to revise (or reaffirm) those beliefs and intentions in the light of your thoughts about whether or not they are justified. A creature that altogether lacked this capacity for re-evaluation would just be stuck with whatever beliefs or intentions it had formed, and would thus lack an important kind of control over what it thought or did. A creature that only had the power to re-evaluate a certain limited range of acts of assent would be correspondingly limited in its ability to revise its beliefs and intentions. In a human being, no act of assenting or withholding assent is ‘off limits’ for re-evaluation, because reason

nerable to the objection that the regress can be avoided if someone possesses two reasoning powers, each of which is used to evaluate the operation of the other. Perhaps Epictetus thinks that this would really just amount to having a single self-evaluating reasoning power, made up of those ‘two’ powers.
Can we, then, use Epictetus’ account to answer our earlier questions about the way in which assenting differs from having impressions? The fact that you can always evaluate any of your assents does help to explain why your assent depends on you in a way that an animal’s impressions do not depend on it. Being able to evaluate your assent is a necessary condition for being able to revise or maintain that assent in the light of this evaluation, and this is a necessary condition that animals lack. On the other hand, as it is a mere necessary condition, the fact that you can evaluate your assent does not explain how it is possible for you to revise your assent in the light of this evaluation. Hence, it does not explain why a human being can assent (or withdraw her assent) for a reason but cannot have impressions (or cease to have impressions) for a reason. The difference between human assent and human impressions cannot lie in the fact that a human being has the capacity to evaluate each of her assents; she can evaluate each of her impressions too. The difference seems rather to lie in the fact that evaluating your assent can itself be a way of revising that assent, whereas you cannot revise your impressions simply by evaluating them. When you reflect on your assent to $P$ and judge that it was mistaken, you thereby cease to assent to $P$, but when you judge that your impression that $P$ is inaccurate, you do not cease to have that impression. An account of the difference between assenting and having impressions needs to explain why assent is such as to be responsive to higher-order evaluation, and why assenting is, in this respect, unlike having an impression.

In what follows I turn to ps.-Simplicius’ commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima* for its presentation of a Neoplatonist view on which reason is self-reflexive in a more radical way. I shall ask whether this view can explain the fact that assenting, unlike having impressions, is such as to be responsive to higher-order evaluation.

---

50 There is, of course, a difference in the two kinds of evaluation. For Epictetus, the power by which you evaluate your assent is the very power you exercise in assenting, whereas the power you exercise in evaluating your impressions is not the power you exercise in having an impression. But it is not at all obvious why this difference should imply that assenting is in your control in a way that having an impression is not.

51 References are to Hayduck’s edition in the Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca series (Berlin, 1882).
3. Ps.-Simplicius and earlier Neoplatonists on self-reversion and control

The authorship of this commentary on *De anima* is disputed. It was attributed by ancient sources to Simplicius, but most scholars now agree that that attribution is a mistake. Many attribute it to Priscian of Lydia (born in the late fifth century AD, an associate of Damascius). For our purposes, it will be important that the author is clearly a Neoplatonist.

According to ps.-Simplicius, what is distinctive about rational assent—what makes assenting different from having impressions—is that assenting involves a special kind of self-cognition. To explain this, he invokes the Neoplatonist notion of ‘self-reversion’ (*epistrophē pros heauton*). All rational assent, he says, is ‘with reversion’ (223. 33–4).

If we are to understand ps.-Simplicius’ appeal to self-reversion here, it will be helpful to look first at earlier uses of this notion. Epictetus himself had used the word *epistrophē* and its associated verb *epistrephein*, though in a somewhat different sense. For Epictetus, to *epistrephein* towards something is to pay attention to and care for that thing. You should pay attention to yourself in order to check whether you are making mistakes (*Diss.* 4. 4. 7. 3–4). When you encounter something new, you should turn to yourself and ask what ability you have for making use of that thing (*Ench.* 10. 1. 1–3). Clearly, this kind of critical engagement with yourself is something that you might or might not achieve. Epictetus complains that people generally care too much about the results of their activities and not enough about the activities themselves. ‘Give me a man’,

---

52 Carlos Steel has argued (1) that the author is not Simplicius, and (2) that the author is Priscian of Lydia. For a summary of his views, with references to further discussion, see C. Steel, ‘Simplicius’: *On Aristotle On the Soul* 3. 6–13 [*’Simplicius’ 3. 6–13*] (London, 2013), 1–4.

he says, ‘who cares how he does what he does [ὁ μέλει πῶς τι ποιήσῃ], who does not concern himself with the result he may achieve, but with his own activity [ὁς ἐπιστρέφεται οὐ τοῦ τυχεῖν τινος, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐνεργείας τῆς αὐτοῦ]’ (Diss. 2. 16. 15. 2–4). Epictetus advises us to pay attention to ourselves in this way, knowing that not all of us will follow this advice. This kind of paying attention to ourselves is not, then, something we do simply in virtue of assenting or making a judgement.

A different, though related, notion of epistrophē came to play a central role in Neoplatonic metaphysics. According to Proclus, for instance, each thing reverts to (epistrephetai pros) the higher source from which it proceeds (ET 31). What this means is that each thing strives to assimilate itself to that higher source, and in so doing gets its good from that higher source. Intellects and rational souls do this in a special way: they revert to higher things by reverting to themselves. They revert to themselves by a certain kind of self-thinking. In striving for a cognitive grasp of its source, an intellect or rational soul succeeds in thinking itself, thereby unifying itself and making itself as similar as can be to that higher source. An intellect engages in self-intellection; a rational soul engages in a less unified kind of self-thinking, which Proclus calls ‘self-movement’.54 This kind of self-thinking is quite different from the contingent self-concern described by Epictetus. Proclus describes both intellects and souls as engaging in an essential kind of self-reversion. An intellect or rational soul, by its self-thinking, makes itself fully what it is.55 This is not, then, the kind of self-thinking that an intellect or rational soul might or might not engage in.

According to Proclus, the rational soul can also revert to itself in another way. As well as reverting to itself in its essence (eternally thinking itself, though in a less unified way than is possible for an intellect), the rational soul also has the capacity to be self-reverting in its activity (ET 44; 191). Though a rational soul’s essence is eternally and necessarily self-reverting, a rational, human soul might or might not succeed in fully reverting to itself in its activity. When a


55 Because of this, Proclus describes intellects and souls as ‘self-constituted’ (αὐθυπόστατα): ET 42–4.
soul succeeds in reverting to itself in its activity, it succeeds in recollecting the essentially self-thinking logoi that make up its essence. Thus, this kind of self-reversion, when it occurs, is an achievement of the rational soul.

Ps.-Simplicius is clearly influenced by such earlier discussions, but when he appeals to self-reversion in his account of assent, he is also saying something importantly different. Assenting is not the kind of self-reverting activity by which an entity (such as a soul or an intellect) makes itself what it is. Nor is assenting necessarily an achievement: in assenting, you can be making a mistake. When he invokes self-reversion here, ps.-Simplicius is saying that assenting (whether correctly or incorrectly) is a kind of activity that makes itself what it is by reverting on itself. As we shall see, his view is that an activity counts as assenting only in so far as it is, in a certain special sense, self-endorsing.

As we have seen, the Stoics held that assenting is in our power in a way that having impressions is not, and that because of this, we are, in a special sense, responsible for assenting or withholding assent. It is natural to wonder, then, whether ps.-Simplicius takes himself to be offering an account of this kind of responsibility.

He certainly does not take himself to be offering a friendly supplement to Stoic views. He argues that only non-bodily things can engage in the relevant kind of self-reflexive activity (In DA 173. 3–7; 279. 29 Hayduck). On his view, then, Stoic materialism makes it impossible to give an adequate account of assent. But does he

---

56 See Procl. In Alc. I 189–90. Proclus says that the soul that is unaware of its own ignorance has not begun to revert to itself in its activity. The soul that has begun to revert to itself recognizes its own ignorance and hence is motivated to enquire. The soul fully reverts to itself when it discovers, or recollects, the λόγοι that are within it. For helpful discussion of this see C. Steel, ‘Breathing Thought: Proclus on the Innate Knowledge of the Soul’, in J. Cleary (ed.), The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism (Leuven, 1997), 293–309. For an account of self-reversion and its role in Proclus’ metaphysics more generally see R. Chlup, Proclus: An Introduction (Cambridge, 2012), ch. 2.

57 Plato himself anticipates the claim that having the ability to engage in a kind of self-reflection is a necessary condition for being able to reason or have beliefs. He says that the kind of soul that cannot reflect on itself must also be incapable of believing or reasoning (Tim. 77 b–c).

58 This criticism of the Stoics contrasts interestingly with the much better-known criticisms made by Alexander of Aphrodisias. Alexander, like ps.-Simplicius, held that the Stoics could not make sense of what is special about rational assent. Rational assent, according to Alexander, is the kind of assent that results from deliberation. This kind of assent, he claims, depends upon the agent (Alex. Aphr. De anima 73. 7–13 Bruns). Because humans have the power to deliberate, and because on the basis
think his alternative account, on which assenting is an essentially self-reverting activity, sheds light on the sense in which assenting is in our power?

Here again it is useful to consider ps.-Simplicius’ account against the background of other Platonist discussions. Proclus had connected the self-moving nature of the human soul with the fact that humans are responsible for their own activity. For example, in his *In Alcibiadem* he invokes the fact that a human being’s soul is self-moving to explain why *Alcibiades* is responsible for his own answers, even when such answers are prompted by Socrates’ questioning (276–80). To have a self-moving soul is to be able to control how you react to external promptings. Such control would be impossible for a non-rational animal:

τὰ μὲν ἄλογα ζώα τῶν πληγῆ λεμομένων ἐστὶ . . . καὶ ἂν ἂν ἄγη τὸ ἄγον, ταύτη καὶ τὰ ἄγομεν ἐγείται, τοῦ ἑαυτῶν ἄρχει καὶ ἑαυτὰ σώζειν παρηρημένα· ὡς δὲ ἀνθρωπίνῃς ψυχῆς διὰ τὴν αὐτενέργητον καὶ αὐτοκίνητον ἰδιότητα πέφυκε περὶ ἑαυτὴν ἑνεργεῖν καὶ ἑαυτὴν κινεῖν καὶ ἑαυτῇ παρέχει τὸ ἄγαθὸν. (In Alc. 279. 18–23)

Non-rational animals are among things ‘shepherded with a staff’ . . . and wherever the leader leads, there the led are led, bereft of the power of ruling and saving themselves; but the human soul, on account of its peculiar characteristic of self-activity and self-movement, is of such a nature as to be active concerning itself, move itself, and provide itself with the good.


Other Platonic texts hint at a connection between self-movement, responsibility, and assent. Calcidius, at *In Tim.* 156 Waszink, argues that because humans are rational animals, choices (or at least certain

of this deliberation they can either assent to or withhold assent from their impressions, they are not automatically led to action by their impressions (*Quaest.* 3. 13, 107. 5–19; *Mant.* 23, 172. 25–30; *De fato* 14, 183. 30–184. 16 Bruns). Alexander argued that the Stoics’ commitment to determinism prevented them from giving a proper account of this kind of assent. He claimed that we can only make sense of the distinctive rational control that humans have over their actions if we allow that adult humans have the kind of power to act otherwise that is incompatible with determinism (a power to act otherwise even when under the influence of precisely the same causes: see *De fato* 6, 171. 11–17; 12, 180. 26–8; 29, 199. 27–200. 7). Thus Alexander, like ps.-Simplicius, holds that Stoic metaphysics gets in the way of a proper account of rational assent. But for Alexander this is because Stoic determinism rules out the possibility of a certain kind of power to act otherwise, whereas for ps.-Simplicius the culprit is Stoic materialism, which (he holds) rules out the possibility of the kind of self-reverting activity that is required for rational assent.
choices) are within their control. In the course of this argument he claims that the soul-power by which a human being assents is ‘self-moving’, and hence that assent and impulse are self-moving. Simplicius, at *In Epict.* 13. 49–14. 9 Dübner, says that people who deny what depends on us overlook both the fact that the soul is essentially self-moving and the fact that it engages in assent and refusal. He goes on to claim that assenting and refusing are ‘internal motions of the soul itself, not external shovings or draggings of some sort’ (ἐνδοθέν εἰσι κινήσεις ἀπ’ αὐτῆς τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ οὐκ ἔξωθεν ὀβησμοὶ ἕ ὅλκαὶ τῶν, 14. 7–9).

When ps.-Simplicius appeals to the notion of self-reversion in his account of assent, he does so against the background of such discussions. By invoking self-reversion in this context he is, I think, implying that we exercise a certain kind of control over our rational assent, and hence over our beliefs and choices. His commentary provides a few indications of this view. Thus, he describes rational life as wholly ‘self-chosen’ (ὅλη αὐτοπροαίρετος ἡ λογικὴ ζωή, 36. 3), and he says that the soul, in its reversion on itself, discovers itself as (among other things) ‘authoritative over itself [ἐν αὐτῆς κυρίαν] on account of living in accord with rational wish’ (7. 22–5). In a later passage he adds that non-rational desire cannot ‘govern itself’ (κυβερνᾶν ἑαυτήν) because of its ‘strong outward tendency’ (τὴν ἔξω σφοδρὰν τάσιν, 290. 9–10), by which he seems to mean its inability to revert on itself.

However, his main focus is not on questions of control or respon-

59 He says that the choice between things that are ‘evenly contingent’ (that is, between things that might equally well happen or not happen) ‘is within the control of man’ (‘penes hominem’), who brings all things back to ‘reason and deliberation’ (‘ad rationem atque consilium’). He goes on to say that reason or deliberation is an inner movement of the soul’s moving principle. This ruling principle of the soul is ‘self-moving and its movement is assent or impulse’ (‘hoc vero ex se movetur motusque eius assensus est vel appetitus’). Thus, ‘assent and impulse are self-moving’ (‘assensus et appetitus ex se moventur’), though they are not moved without imagination, or ‘what the Greeks call φαντασία’ (Calcid. In *Tim.* ch. 156 Waszinsk).


61 Though he argues that belief (δόξα) does not depend on us (is not ἐφ ἡμῖν), what he means by this is just that we do not believe at will. (I discuss his argument in sect. 7 below.)

62 The context is one in which he is arguing that human perceptual powers, because they are in a way self-reverting, share in a kind of rationality (a claim I discuss below, sect. 4). His claim here is that since human non-rational desires are not self-reverting in any way, they do not share in rationality. Hence such desires are non-rational in a way that even human perception is not (290. 4–15).
sibility. As one would expect, the nature of his account is influenced by the fact that it is a commentary on Aristotle. In introducing the notion of self-reversion he is aiming to account for the differences between kinds of soul-power: to explain how the powers of human souls differ from those of animal souls and how the rational powers of the human soul differ from its non-rational powers. To do this, he thinks, it is necessary to spell out in some detail the precise sense in which rational activities are uniquely self-reflexive. Though influenced by Neoplatonic views about self-reversion, ps.-Simplicius’ account is also idiosyncratic, drawing on and modifying such views in an attempt to make sense of Aristotle’s text. What emerges is an interesting and novel account of the distinctive nature of rational powers. As we shall see, it is an account that explores, in a new and fascinating way, the connection between judging and a certain kind of self-reflexivity.

My aim in the rest of this paper is to ask about the significance of this rather striking appeal to the Neoplatonic notion of self-reversion in his account of assent. What does the introduction of the notion of self-reversion add to Stoic accounts of the difference between human and animal behaviour? Does it help us to answer any of our questions about the difference between assenting and having impressions? Can it, for instance, explain why it is possible to assent (or withhold assent) for a reason but not possible to have an impression for a reason?

4. Ps.-Simplicius’ classification of soul-power as rational or non-rational

Unlike the Stoics, ps.-Simplicius follows both Plato and Aristotle in holding that, within the human soul, there are some powers that are strictly speaking rational and others that are not. Thus, on the cognitive side, the powers of belief (*doxa*) and intellect (*nous*) are rational, whereas the powers of perception (*aisthēsis*) and impression/imagination (*phantasia*) are non-rational. On the desiderative side, appetite (*epithumia*) is non-rational, whereas wish (*boulēsis*) and choice (*prohairesis*) are rational.

However, this distinction is complicated by ps.-Simplicius’ view that the possession of reason influences (in various different ways) all the other powers of the soul. Thus, human perception, *phanta-

---

63 Ps.-Simplicius describes *doxa* as the lowest rational power at 237. 8–9.
sia, and epithumia (and even human vegetative powers) are quite unlike their animal counterparts. Ps.-Simplicius goes so far as to say that perception in humans is only homonymously related to perception in animals—a view that he takes from Iamblichus. Because of these views, Ps.-Simplicius sometimes describes human perception and appetite as ‘rational’. His point, though, is not that perception or desire (in a human) is strictly speaking a power of the rational part of the soul. Rather, the claim is that the human powers of perception and appetite are of a special kind because they are powers that belong to a soul that is essentially rational.

What distinguishes those powers that are strictly speaking rational (a) from the non-rational powers of animals, and (b) from the non-rational human soul-powers? Ps.-Simplicius’ answer to (a) is that rational powers differ from the non-rational powers of animals in being capable of a kind of self-reversion. All rational cognition, he says, involves self-reversion: ‘for every rational cognition, even if it is of something external, comes about by returning to itself and judging its own understanding’. This capacity for self-reversion is proper (idion) to the rational (logike) soul; perceptual and epithetic souls are distinguished from rational soul by the fact that they are not capable of self-reversion (41. 26–9). Self-reversion is not possible for a non-rational, animal power.

Ps.-Simplicius’ account of the difference between rational and non-rational powers within a human being (that is, his answer to (b) above) is more complicated since, as we have seen, he thinks that human non-rational powers share in rationality. This leads him to say that human non-rational powers are, like rational powers, capable of a kind of self-reversion and hence a kind of self-cognition. He can thus agree with Aristotle’s claim that one’s awareness of one’s

---

64 For perception see 187. 27–36; for vegetative and perceptual powers see 80. 12–17; for perception and appetite desire see 290. 1–15.
65 See 290. 1: ‘In a human being both sense perception and desire are rational.’ Similarly, at 306. 18–20 he says that imagination in humans is rational.
66 Human perception is self-aware in a particular way (a human can be aware by sight of her seeing). Human appetite is especially capable of being corrupted because it is conjoined with a rational power (290. 1–15).
67 πᾶσα γὰρ λογικὴ γνώσις κάν τοῦ ἐκτὸς ἡ, εἰς ἑαυτῆς ἐπιστρέφουσα καὶ τὴν ἑαυτῆς κρίνουσα σύνεσιν γίνεται, 274. 22–4. See also 90. 15–16; 223. 33–4.
68 See also 173. 3–4: ‘It is proper particularly to intellect, and in the second place to reason, to have the capacity to cognize itself.’ At 187. 28–9 self-reversion is described as the ἔργον of rational life.
own seeing is an exercise of the power of sight (De anima 3. 2). The capacity for this kind of self-aware exercise is, he claims, unique to human (and hence logos-influenced) perceptual powers (173. 3–7; 187. 27–36). \(^6^9\)

In spite of this complication, ps.-Simplicius does, I think, want to say that there is a kind of self-reverting activity that is possible only for powers that are strictly speaking rational (powers of belief, nous, and wish). Although he says that human perceiving, because it is self-aware, involves a kind of self-reversion, ps.-Simplicius describes this as a mere imitation of the kind of self-reversion that is possible for reason: sense perception can ‘perceive itself and imitate the reversion of reason upon itself’ (καὶ ἑαυτῆς συναισθάνεσθαι καὶ ἀπομιμεῖσθαι τὴν τοῦ λόγου πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπιστροφὴν, 290. 4–6). Moreover, ps.-Simplicius’ argument that believing is the exercise of a rational power depends upon the assumption that rational powers are self-reverting in a way that non-rational human powers are not. As we shall see, he argues that taking something to be true involves self-reversion and hence is only possible for a strictly rational power (90. 16–18). That is why, though we can perceive truly, we cannot, using perception alone, grasp that something is true (204. 35–205. 1).

On ps.-Simplicius’ view a rational power is, in the following respect, like a human perceptual power: each can be exercised in such a way that it has its own activity as its object. What, then, is the difference between proper, rational self-reverting and the kind of self-awareness that ps.-Simplicius thinks is possible in cases of human perceiving? In what sense is the latter only an ‘imitation’ of the former?

There are two important differences between proper, rational

\(^{69}\) Ps.-Simplicius claims that the aim of the whole third book of De anima is to give an account of the powers of a rational soul (‘the soul that makes choices, that is the reasoning and intellective soul in mortal beings’; see 172. 4–5). This allows him to take Aristotle’s discussion of perception in this book as being specifically about the perceptual capacities of rational animals. Ps.-Simplicius’ account here stands in interesting contrast to that of Philoponus (who also thinks that the third book of the De anima is about the rational soul, but takes the discussion of perception and imagination to be introduced so as to draw a contrast between these powers and rational powers, 466. 5–19). Philoponus, like ps.-Simplicius, regards the capacity for self-reversion as a distinctively rational or intellectual capacity (and claims that only something that is ‘eternal and incorporeal’ can have such a capacity: In DA 466. 20–2 Hayduck), but he concludes from this that Aristotle is mistaken to claim that perceptual powers are self-reflexive (and hence that the power of sight can know that it sees). Rather, he claims, we are aware of our perceiving by means of a certain rational attentive power (465. 32 ff.).
self-reversion and the kind of self-reversion that is possible for human perceptual powers. First, the exercise of a properly rational power is essentially self-reflexive in a way that the exercise of a perceptual power is not: if φ-ing is a rational activity, then its being the activity it is consists (at least in part) in its cognizing itself as that activity. For example, if believing is the exercise of a properly rational power, then one counts as believing only in so far as one grasps oneself as believing. This, I think, is what ps.-Simplicius means when he says that rational activity (logikē energeia) does not come about without reverting to itself (90. 15–16). By contrast, the exercise of a perceptual power (even a human perceptual power) is not essentially self-reflexive in this way. Your awareness of yourself as seeing is something additional that runs alongside the activity of seeing; this additional awareness is not part of the very activity of seeing (though it is, like your seeing, an exercise of your power of sight). Just as, when you are aware of not seeing, your awareness of yourself trying and failing to see is an additional exercise of your power of sight over and above your exercise of that power in trying to see, so also when you are aware of your seeing, you use your power of sight twice, both in seeing and in being aware of seeing (189. 22–23). On ps.-Simplicius’ view your seeing and your awareness of that seeing are two distinct, though simultaneous, exercises of your power of sight, one of which has the other as its object.  

Modern scholars have disagreed over the interpretation of Aristotle’s remarks about perceptual self-awareness in De anima 3. 2. On one view he is claiming only that it is by using the capacity, sight, that one is aware of one’s own seeing; on an alternative view his claim is that the activity of seeing is self-reflexive, and hence sees itself. T. Johansen defends the former ‘capacity’ reading (‘In Defense of Inner Sense: Aristotle on Perceiving that One Sees’, Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy, 21 (2005), 235–76); V. Caston defends the latter ‘activity’ reading (‘Aristotle on Consciousness’, Mind, 111 (2002), 751–815). If my interpretation of ps.-Simplicius is right, then he must read Aristotle in the former way (though interestingly, his account of rational self-reversion is rather like the account of perceptual self-awareness that Caston attributes to Aristotle). Ps.-Simplicius is clearly using the word ὀψίς here (and taking Aristotle to use it) to mean ‘sight’, not ‘seeing’, and similarly, he is using the word αἴσθησις in this passage to mean ‘sense’, not ‘activity of perceiving’. Thus, at 188. 16–23, in discussing Aristotle’s claim that his imaginary opponent is committed to an infinite regress, ps.-Simplicius says that if another sense (αἴσθησις) than sight (ὅψις) cognizes that sight sees, that sense also would be ‘cognized, when active [ἐνεργοῦσαν], that it is active’ (188. 18). The qualification ‘when active’ shows that αἴσθησις and ὀψίς must here refer to the capacities rather than the activities themselves. Ps.-Simplicius must, then, be assuming that the threatened regress here is a regress of higher-order senses, not a regress of higher-order activities. (He faces no threatened regress of higher-order activities. Though he thinks that seeing and being aware of one’s seeing are two different exercises of
The second way in which perceptual self-reversion differs from strict, rational self-reversion is that reason is able to apprehend both its activity and also its own ‘substance and power’, whereas perceptual self-awareness involves only the apprehension of an activity. As ps.-Simplicius says, a human perceptual power does not turn to itself as intellect or reason does, ‘for it is not able to cognize its substance or its power . . . but only its activity’ (οὐ γὰρ καὶ τῆς οὐσίας καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως γνωριστικὴ γίνεται . . . ἀλλὰ μόνης τῆς ἐνεργείας, 188. 1–2).

As we shall see, ps.-Simplicius’ account of rational assent draws on both of the distinctive features of rational self-reversion. Assenting is an essentially self-reflexive exercise of a cognitive power, and moreover, assenting necessarily involves apprehending the very power one is exercising in assenting. On both these grounds, then, assenting must be the exercise of a strictly rational power.

5. Ps.-Simplicius on belief (doxa), assent, and self-reversion

Ps.-Simplicius introduces the notion of assent in commenting on the Aristotelian argument that belief requires conviction (pistis), and hence is not possible for brutes (DA 3. 3, 428a19–22):

ἀλλὰ δόξῃ μὲν ἕπεται πίστις (οὐκ ἐνδέχεται γὰρ δοξάζοντα οἷς δοκεῖ μὴ πιστεύειν), τῶν δὲ θηρίων οὐθενὶ ὑπάρχει πίστις, φαντασία δὲ πολλοῖς.

But conviction follows belief (for without conviction in what we believe we cannot have a belief), and among brutes, none has conviction but many have imagination.

the power of sight, by claiming that we can always be aware of our seeing he does not commit himself to the view that we have higher-order awareness of every exercise of our power of sight.)

71 He also adds that perception is not ‘self-aroused’ (οὐδὲ ἄφι ἐαυτὴς τό ὅλον ἐγειρομένη): perceiving depends upon the presence of an object of perception (188. 2). At 118–19 he says that this dependence of perception on something external explains why the senses are not self-reverting in the way that reason is (i.e. why the senses cannot revert on their own power): only a self-perfecting activity can be self-reverting in this way (119. 20–1), and an activity can only be self-perfecting if it is the activity of a power that is self-sufficient and not dependent on external things (118. 29 ff.). φαντασία is in an intermediate position: it is, in a way, self-aroused (202. 4–6), since one can have φαντασία of things that are not present, but φαντασία still depends on an indirect way on perception (‘it grasps only external things and is originally stimulated by the affections of the sense organs’, 119. 14–16). This indirect dependence of φαντασία on external things is enough to prevent φαντασία from engaging in self-perfecting activity, and hence from engaging in the kind of self-reversion that is only possible for rational powers.
In explaining this argument, ps.-Simplicius describes conviction (pistis) as a kind of rational assent. Conviction (pistis), he says, is ‘assent to what has been apprehended, as true’ (πίστις δὲ ἐστιν ἡ ὡς ἀληθεὶ τῷ γνωσθέντι συγκατάθεσις, 210. 14).²² He goes on to claim that conviction, and hence assent of this sort, is also necessarily involved in exercising higher cognitive functions, such as knowledge (epistēmē), intellect (nous), and practical wisdom (phronēsis) (210. 36–7). Non-rational animals cannot assent to something as true (and hence cannot have beliefs) because such assent involves self-reversion of a kind that requires the exercise of a strictly rational power (90. 15–18; 223. 33–4).

Ps.-Simplicius was not the first philosopher to appeal to the Stoic notion of assent in explaining this Aristotelian argument, but he was the first to invoke the notion of self-reversion in this context.²³ To make sense of ps.-Simplicius’ version of this argument, we need to understand why he takes assenting to require self-reversion. Prima facie, it is not obvious why we should accept that assenting involves any kind of self-reversion. At 90. 17–18 ps.-Simplicius says that conviction (pistis) is ‘judging of the thing apprehended that it is true and at that time assenting’ (τὸ γνωσθὲν ὅτι ἀληθὲς ἐπικρινούσης καὶ τότε συγκατατιθεμένης· τοῦτο γὰρ ἡ πίστις; my translation). In many cases the thing apprehended, and hence judged to be true, will be something external. For instance, I might apprehend a blackbird in the garden. Judging that the thing apprehended is true will then amount to judging (and hence believing) that there is, in fact, a blackbird in the garden. What I assent to, in such a case, seems to be a claim about the blackbird and the garden, not a claim about me or my apprehension. Why, then, does ps.-Simplicius suppose that in giving such assent I must be exercising a self-reverting power?

There are several passages in which ps.-Simplicius draws connections between rational assent, self-reversion, and judging something to be true.²⁴ From these, we can begin to put together some elements of his view. His point is that self-reversion is required to

---

²² Elsewhere (90. 17) he says that πίστις follows (is μετά) assent. At 206. 32 he says that ὑπόληψις is ‘in’ assent.

²³ Alexander, Themistius, and Philoponus all appeal to assent in discussing this Aristotelian argument. See Alex. Aphr. De anima 67. 15–23 Bruns; Themist. In DA 89–90 Heinze (esp. 90. 24: ‘belief is a rational assent’); Philop. In DA 497. 1–14 Houd.

²⁴ 90. 15 ff.; 206. 30 ff.; 210. 14 ff., 20 ff.; 211. 1 ff.; 237. 7 ff.
make a truth claim (alētheuein or pseudesthai). To make a truth claim is to make an assertion about how things are. It is this ability to make assertions about how things are that distinguishes the kind of cognition that involves assent (namely rational cognition) from the kind of cognition that does not involve assent (perceptual cognition). Non-rational cognition can be true, but it cannot tell truths or falsehoods (alētheuein or pseudesthai): that is, it cannot—correctly or otherwise—make claims about what is the case. Ps.-Simplicius also says that neither sense perception nor imagination (phantasia) can ‘apprehend something as true’ and that instead each is simply a kind of grasp of its objects: sense perception of objects of sense, imagination of impressions. When he says that sense and imagination are merely of their objects, he does not mean to imply that the content of perception or imagination must be non-propositional. He is quite prepared, for instance, to describe sight as

75 Τὸ ἀληθεύειν is to make a correct truth claim (a truth claim that is in fact true); to ψεύδεσθαι is to make an incorrect truth claim (a truth claim that is in fact false).

76 Ps.-Simplicius says that this ability to ἀληθεύειν or ψεύδεσθαι is common to all ὑπόληψις, since every kind of ὑπόληψις involves assent (206. 31–2). In commenting on Aristotle’s remarks at DA 427b24, he goes on to make it clear that he takes ὑπόληψις to include δόξα, ἐπιστήμη, and φρόνησις (207. 18–22). ἀληθεύειν and ψεύδεσθαι must, in such contexts, mean ‘tell truths’ or ‘tell falsehoods’ in the sense of making true or false assertions. What is characteristic of rational ὑπόληψις (in contrast to non-rational operations, such as seeing or imagining) is that it tells truths or falsehoods, in this sense. Similarly, it is the fact that δόξα necessarily tells truths or falsehoods (where this means, correctly or incorrectly, making assertions about how things are) that explains why δόξα is ‘not dependent on us’. Thus, I think Blumenthal, in ‘Simplicius’ 3. 1–5, is wrong to translate 206. 31 as ‘being true or false is said to be common to every kind’ (of ὑπόληψις), and also wrong to translate 210. 12–13 as ‘having an opinion was said not to be in our control because it is necessarily false or true’. On ps.-Simplicius’ view, imagining is also grasping something that is necessarily either false or true, but to imagine something is not to make an assertion about how things are, so imagining does not require the ability to ἀληθεύειν or ψεύδεσθαι. Contrast ‘Themistius’ use of the terms ἀληθεύειν and ψεύδεσθαι at In DA 90. 20–1 Heinze. Themistius says that it is common to both δόξα and φαντασία to ἀληθεύειν and ψεύδεσθαι. This suggests that Themistius, unlike ps.-Simplicius, is using these terms to mean ‘be true or false’.

77 206. 14–16: ὅσπερ γὰρ ἡ αἴσθησις οὐκ ἦν ᾧ ἢ ψεύδεσθαι, ἀλλὰ μόνον τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ, ὡσαύτως οὐδὲ ἡ φαντασία, ἀλλὰ μόνον τῶν τύπων. The context is a discussion of Aristotle’s remark that φαντασία depends on us in a way that belief does not. Ps.-Simplicius has just pointed out a way in which φαντασία is unlike belief: φαντασία depends on us because we do not fashion the impressions (τύπων) in accordance with things, nor do we bring forward (προβάλλειν) images (φαντασίαι) with our minds focused entirely on the truth (τῆς ἀληθείας φροντίζοντες πάντως) (206. 14). He now goes on to point out a way in which φαντασία is like perception: neither perceiving nor having φαντασία amounts to apprehending things as true.
cognizing ‘that a thing is white’ (204. 35–205. 1) or ‘that the thing seen is a man’ (210. 20–1). Nor, I think, does he even mean to rule out the possibility that the content of one’s imaginative impression could be that such and such is true. His point is that neither perceiving that a thing is white nor having an impression that such and such is true amounts to apprehending something as true. That is because (as he understands it) ‘apprehending something as true’ involves making a truth claim (a certain kind of assertion about what is the case), whereas having an impression that something is true does not, in the same sense, involve making a truth claim.\footnote{78}{In a later passage he repeats the claim that non-rational cognition cannot ‘apprehend something as true’ and explains that though such cognition can be true, it cannot ‘judge the very fact that it is true’ (ἀληθής μὲν ὑπάρχουσα, οὐκ αὐτῷ δὲ τὸν κρίνουσα ὁτι ἀληθῆς, 211. 4–5).}

Ps.-Simplicius says that making a truth claim involves a kind of self-cognition: in making a judgement that something is true, one must take oneself to be judging truly.\footnote{79}{Interestingly, ps.-Simplicius makes an analogous point about the distinction between rational and non-rational desire. Just as taking something to be true requires a rational cognitive power, so also desiring something as good (as opposed to as merely pleasant) requires a rational desiderative power. In both cases a kind of self-reflexivity is required: ‘in the simultaneous perception of something as being good or true there is necessarily included also the subject’s being benefited or itself saying what is true’ (211. 10–12). Ps.-Simplicius does not explain how to understand this self-reflexivity in the case of rational desire. If it is to be analogous to what he says about cognition, then he should say that in desiring something as good, one endorses the power one exercises in so desiring, as being in this instance rightly exercised—but that is quite a lot to read into the remark that in desiring something as good one must grasp oneself ‘as being benefited’.
}

It is this ‘grasping of itself that it is telling truths’ that requires self-reversion and hence the exercise of a strictly rational power. Thus, he says that the assent to something as true is ‘accomplished

\footnote{80}{As should be clear from what I have already said, ps.-Simplicius is here spelling out what is involved in ‘telling truths’ (ἀληθεύειν), not merely what is involved in a certain special kind of truth-telling (the kind that involves grasping of oneself that one is telling truths). His view is that if something is to tell truths, it must grasp of itself that it is telling truths.}
in accordance with the reversion of belief to itself, judging as true its own understanding of things’ (κατὰ τὴν τῆς δόξης πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἐπι-
tελουμένη ἐπιστροφήν, κρινούσης ὡς ἄληθη τὴν ἑαυτὴς περὶ τῶν πραγ-
μάτων σύνεσιν, 237. 9–11). Of course, judgements can be false, so one can be mistaken in taking one’s understanding to be true, but whether or not one is mistaken, ps.-Simplicius holds that one must take one’s understanding to be true in order to count as assenting. He says:

ἡ δὲ διάνοια κἂν ἄληθῶς κἂν ψευδῶς προσβάλλῃ τοῖς γνωστοῖς, οὐκ ἀρκεῖται τῇ προσβολῇ οὐδὲ συγκατατίθεται, εἰ μὴ καὶ ὅτι ἄληθής ἡ σύνεσις ἐπικρίνῃ ἢ ὀρθῶς ἢ οὔ, ποτὲ καὶ περὶ τὴν ἐπίκρισιν ἁμαρτάνουσα. (205. 7–10)

Discursive reason [dianoia], whether it reaches out to the objects of cognition correctly or falsely, is not satisfied with the reaching out and does not give its assent unless it also judges, correctly or otherwise, that its understanding is true (and sometimes it also makes a mistake about this judgement).

Ps.-Simplicius’ claim here is that when one assents (that is, takes something to be true), one’s belief (doxa) or discursive reason (dianoia) must take its own understanding (sunesis) to be true. To work out what he means by this, we need to answer two distinct questions: (1) what is meant by ‘taking understanding to be true’? and (2) what is it for belief (or discursive reason) to take its own understanding to be true?

Ps.-Simplicius uses the word ‘understanding’ (sunesis) in a very broad sense. Both rational and non-rational cognition can be an

81 I translate δοξάζει as ‘believe’ and κρίνει as ‘judge’, but I do not think that much hangs on the distinction here. The Greek word δοξάζει can also be translated ‘judge’. The English word ‘believes’ tends to be used to attribute a dispositional state (such that it can be true that x believes P, even while x is asleep), whereas ‘x judges that P’ tends to be used of something that one does at a particular time. The relation between judging and believing is not straightforward. Often, making a judgement is forming a belief, but judging can also be a kind of activation and reaffirmation of a belief one already has, and it is possible to come to have a belief that P without there being any time at which one considered whether P and made a judgement. I shall argue that according to ps.-Simplicius, one only counts as believing/judging that P if one endorses the understanding in virtue of which one believes/judges that P. It does not matter whether we take this claim to be about the disposition of believing or about the activity of judging, so long as we understand the notion of ‘endorsement’ accordingly: if the claim is about believing that P, then the relevant kind of endorsement is believing that our understanding is correct; if the claim is about judging that P, then the relevant kind of endorsement is judging that our understanding is correct. In what follows I shall spell out the claim as a claim about judging that P.

82 For this reason, ‘understanding’ is a slightly misleading translation, more ap-
exercise of *sunesis*. For example, at 210. 20–7 he implies that there is a perceptual kind of *sunesis* that is exercised in simply perceiving something (for example, perceiving that there is a man), and he distinguishes this from a second, rational kind of *sunesis* that is exercised in making a judgement on the basis of one’s perception (for example, judging that there is in fact a man).  

Ps.-Simplicius does not spell out what it is for a kind of *sunesis* to be true, so here we have to speculate. What does the claim that your *sunesis* is *true* add to the claim that your judgement or perception is *true*? His view, I suggest, is as follows. To claim that your judgement is true is to claim that things in fact are as you judge them to be; similarly, to claim that your perception is true is to claim that things in fact are as you perceive them to be. To claim that your (perceptual or rational) *sunesis* is true is to claim something more than this: it is to claim that you are achieving truth non-accidentally, in virtue of correctly exercising your *sunesis*. Your power of *sunesis* is true on a particular occasion if and only if it is achieving truth in virtue of functioning well as the kind of *sunesis* it is.

Your perceptual *sunesis* is functioning correctly just in case your perceptual powers are functioning well: you are not hallucinating, your vision is not distorted, and so on. When you make a judgement on the basis of perceptual *sunesis*, you judge that your perceptual *sunesis* is achieving truth in virtue of its correct functioning. Ps.-Simplicius gives an example in which you hesitate to make such a judgement because you are unsure whether your perceptual *sunesis* suggests to you is in fact true. You might see that there is a man in the distance, but nevertheless hold back from endorsing your perceptual *sunesis* and hence from judging that there is a man until you have confirmed that the thing in question is ‘two-footed and moving and upright’ (210. 23). In this case, you initially hold back from endorsing your perceptual *sunesis* because you know that (even when your perception is functioning correctly) the visual appropriate for rational than for perceptual *σώσεις*. In what follows I shall mostly just use the transliterated Greek word *sunesis* in the main text.

At 210. 25–6 he says that the *σώσεις* of a thing is not the same as the *σώσεις* of the fact that that *σώσεις* is true (οὐ γὰρ ταὐτὸν ἡ περὶ ὁτουοῦν σύνεσις καὶ ἡ περὶ τοῦ ὅτι καὶ ἀληθῆς ἡ σύνεσις). In this context he is distinguishing between perceptual and rational *σώσεις*. His point is that the *σώσεις* we exercise in simply perceiving a thing is not the same as the *σώσεις* we exercise in judging this perceptual *σώσεις* to be true and hence in making a judgement that something is the case.

As ps.-Simplicius says, truth consists in agreement with the facts (206. 34–5).
pearance of things that are far away can be misleading: how things appear in the distance is not always a good guide to how things are. There is also, I suggest, another way in which you might fail to endorse your perceptual *sunesis*. Suppose you suffer from a hallucination of a man, you know you are hallucinating, and yet you have independent grounds for judging that there is in fact a man there (perhaps even a man who looks just like what appears to you in your hallucinatory experience). In this case, what your visual appearance suggest to you (namely that there is a man) is in fact true, and you do judge (on independent grounds) that there is a man there, but you do not judge that your perceptual *sunesis* is true. You realize that your visual *sunesis* is not achieving truth in virtue of functioning well as the kind of *sunesis* it is. Truth here is not an achievement of your visual *sunesis*. As a result, though you judge that there is a man, your judgement is not based on how things visually appear to you.

To assent, or make a judgement, is to exercise rational *sunesis* (although, as we have seen, when you make a judgement on the basis of perception, you also exercise your perceptual *sunesis*). To take your rational *sunesis* to be true is to take yourself to be achieving truth in virtue of the correct functioning of your capacity for assent.

Ps.-Simplicius does not himself spell out what it is for this capacity to be functioning correctly, but we can reconstruct his view on the basis of certain remarks he makes about the relation between assent and reasoning. In discussing assent, he distinguishes between two different kinds of cognition. You might fully grasp something with your intellect, knowing it in an ‘undivided and unitary way’, or alternatively, you might lack this intellectual grasp, but instead have the kind of cognition that depends on reasoning (210. 16–20). In the first case your assent need not depend upon reasoning. In the second case your assent (or withholding assent) should depend on whether or not there is reason to assent: whether or not you assent should depend ‘entirely on reason [*logos*] (whether necessary or convincing), or on the speaker’s being a trustworthy person, judging this too in accordance with some reason [*logos*]’ (210. 18–20). These remarks suggest that whether your capacity for assent

---

85 A necessary λόγος for a certain conclusion proves that conclusion to be true; a convincing (πιθανός) λόγος gives good reason to believe the conclusion. Here (at 210. 17–20) ps.-Simplicius uses the term ‘rational cognition’ (λογικὴ γνῶσις) to refer narrowly just to this kind of cognition that depends on λόγος (as opposed to the
Rational Assent and Self-Reversion

is functioning correctly depends upon your warrant for assenting. If your assent is not based on reasoning, then your capacity for assent is functioning correctly just in case you have the kind of unitary knowledge that warrants giving this kind of assent. On the other hand, if your assent is based on reasoning, then your capacity for assent will be functioning correctly just in case the reasons on which it depends do in fact provide good grounds for assenting. When you take the sunesis you exercise in assenting to be true, you take yourself to be achieving truth in virtue of the fact that your sunesis warrants you in assenting as you do. Once again, then, taking your sunesis to be true is a matter of taking yourself to be achieving truth non-accidentally, in virtue of exercising that sunesis. A judgement based on bad reasoning might still be true, but the sunesis exercised in making such a judgement would not be true.86

This explains what it is to judge one’s sunesis to be true, but it does not yet explain the peculiar self-reflexivity ps.-Simplicius attributes to the act of judging. To understand this, we need to answer the second question I raised for his account. We need to explain what he means when he says that rational cognition takes its own sunesis to be true: that is, when he says that belief (doxa) judges as true ‘its own understanding about things’ (τὴν ἑαυτῆς περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων σύνεσιν, 237. 11), or that rational cognition ‘comes about by reverting to itself and judging its own understanding’ (εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἐπιστρέφουσα καὶ τὴν ἑαυτῆς κρίνουσα σύνεσιν γίνεται, 274. 23-4).

86 When you judge that $P$ on the basis of seeing that $P$, you endorse not only your perceptual σύνεσις, but also the rational σύνεσις you exercise in endorsing your perceptual σύνεσις, and also the rational σύνεσις you exercise in assenting to $P$ on this basis. You judge that how things then visually appear to you is a good guide to how they are (that is, you endorse your perceptual σύνεσις). You take yourself to be warranted in making this judgement about your perceptual σύνεσις (that is, you endorse the σύνεσις you exercise in assenting to ‘how things now appear to me is a good guide to how they are’). And you also take yourself to be warranted in assenting to $P$ on this basis (that is, you endorse the σύνεσις you exercise in assenting to $P$). An infinite regress might seem to threaten here. Do you also need to judge that you are warranted in taking yourself to be warranted in endorsing your perceptual σύνεσις, and if so, do you then also need to judge that you are warranted in making that judgement, and so on? (Similarly, do you need to judge that you are warranted in taking yourself to be warranted in assenting to $P$, and that you are warranted in making that judgement, and so on?) As we shall see, ps.-Simplicius’ account of the way in which rational σύνεσις is self-reflexive gives him an answer to this worry.
When you judge whether your perceptual *sunesis* is true, you use one power (your rational power of assent) to evaluate another (your perceptual *sunesis*). When you judge whether a belief you held ten years ago was warranted, you are exercising your power of assent to evaluate another exercise of that very power. According to ps.-Simplicius, the self-reflexivity that is essential to judging is of a stronger kind: judging is self-reflexive in that it involves one cognitive act evaluating itself. His view is that any act of judgement must contain, as part of its content, an endorsement of the *sunesis* being exercised *in that very act of judgement*.

It is perhaps easiest to explain this with an example. Ps.-Simplicius is claiming that you cannot judge, say, that there is a blackbird in the garden without, *as part of this act of judgement*, judging that you are achieving truth in virtue of using your understanding (*sunesis*) correctly in making this judgement.\(^8\) The content of your judgement will thus be ‘there is a blackbird in the garden and the understanding I am exercising in making this judgement is true’. ‘This judgement’ here must refer to the *whole* judgement (that is, to the judgement that has as its content the whole of ‘there is a blackbird in the garden and the understanding I am exercising in making this judgement is true’). In this sense, then, your act of judgement is necessarily self-referential: it has as part of its content something that refers to itself.

As we have already seen, taking this understanding (*sunesis*) to be true is taking yourself to be achieving truth in virtue of being warranted in making the judgement. When you judge ‘there is a blackbird in the garden and the understanding I am exercising in making this judgement is true’, you are judging that your understanding warrants the *whole* judgement: ‘there is a blackbird in the garden and the understanding I am exercising in making this judge-

\(^8\) Interestingly, this view has something in common with a self-referential account of belief that has been defended by Gilbert Harman. Harman argues that to accept a conclusion *h*, as known, one must implicitly accept the self-referential claim ‘*h* and there is no actually undermining evidence to the truth of this whole conjunction’ (G. Harman, ‘Reasoning and Evidence One Does Not Possess’, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 5 (1980), 165–82 at 172). In another paper Harman suggests that the content of a belief that *φ* ‘is something like “I am in this mental state because of something that settles it that *φ*”’ (G. Harman, ‘Self-Reflexive Thoughts’, *Philosophical Issues*, 16 (2006), 334–45 at 341). Harman argues that the fact that *certain* self-reflexive thoughts give rise to paradox (as in the famous paradox of the liar) is not a good ground for rejecting the possibility of *any* self-reflexive thoughts, and hence is not a good ground for rejecting this account of belief.
ment is true’. This is the sense in which belief (doxa) judges as true its own understanding (237. 11). 88

According to ps.-Simplicius, part of what it is to make a judgement is to judge that this judgement is warranted. This cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by supposing that each act of judgement is accompanied by some further act, in which the original act is judged to be achieving truth in virtue of being warranted. 89 First, such a view would imply an infinite regress of acts of judging; 90 but second, and equally importantly, such a view would fail to account for the essential relation between making a judgement and taking yourself to be achieving truth because you are warranted in making that judgement. Ps.-Simplicius is not claiming merely that in judging you must also, necessarily, endorse your judging. His point is that your act of judging only counts as an act of judging in virtue of your endorsement of it. Your endorsement does not merely accompany your act of judging, it is what constitutes that act as an act of judging. As such, ps.-Simplicius assumes, this endorsement must be included in the act itself. This is why the content of the act of judgement must be self-referential in the way we have described.

We are now in a position to understand why judging must be the exercise of a strictly rational power. According to ps.-Simplicius, a power must be rational if it is to be exercised self-reflexively in the way that is required for judgement. As we saw earlier, the exercise of human perceptual powers is only self-reflexive in a certain limited way. You can exercise a perceptual power in being aware of another distinct exercise of the same power (as when you use your power of

88 Of course, in reporting our judgements we do not usually articulate this self-referential content. We say ‘There is a blackbird in the garden’, not ‘There is a blackbird in the garden and the understanding I’m exercising in this act of judgement is true’; we say ‘Labour has a good chance of winning the next election’, not ‘Labour has a good chance of winning the next election and the understanding I’m exercising in this act of judgement is true’, and so on. On ps.-Simplicius’ view, this is simply a pragmatic point about how we express our judgements. What we judge will always include the self-referential content ‘the understanding I’m exercising in this act of judgement is true’, and it is possible to make this content of the judgement explicit (as I have done in the examples above), even though in reporting our judgements we do not generally do so.

89 At 205. 7–10 ps.-Simplicius says that διάνοια does not give its assent unless it also (καί) judges that its σύνεσις is true. But the καί here does not imply two distinct acts of judgement. His point is that διάνοια must, in one and the same act of judging, judge both that Π and also that the σύνεσις exercised in this very act of judging is true.

90 It would imply an infinite regress since the act of judging the original judgement to be warranted would itself need to be judged warranted by yet another act of judgement, that act by yet another one, and so on.
sight in being aware of your seeing), but this awareness cannot be a single self-reflexive act, nor can it be an awareness of the power itself. The power you exercise in judging must be self-reflexive in just these ways. Your judging is a single self-reflexive act, and it is an act in which you grasp (and evaluate) the power by which you judge, since it is an act in which you endorse the *sunesis* that you are exercising in that very judgement.\(^{91}\)

6. Some problems for this account of judging

This account, if it can be defended, explains why assenting must be the exercise of a self-reflexive, and hence rational, power. But *can* it be defended? In the final two sections of this paper I consider some advantages of this account and some potential objections to it. The advantages lie in the account’s explanatory power: I argue that it provides a basis both for explaining the impossibility of believing at will and for answering our questions about reason-responsiveness. The potential objections are of three types: a worry that the account is circular, a worry that it over-intellectualizes judging, and a worry that it is vulnerable to certain counter-examples. In what follows I first discuss how ps.-Simplicius might respond to these objections, and then go on to consider the account’s explanatory power.

\(^{(a)}\) Is the account circular?

There is a certain sense in which this account of judging is circular: it invokes the very notion it is supposed to be explicating. On this account, part of what it is to make a judgement is to *judge* that one’s judgement is warranted (or in other words, to endorse the understanding one is exercising in so judging). In reply, I think ps.-Simplicius would deny that such circularity is vicious. On
ps.-Simplicius’ view, *any* account of a self-reverting activity must be circular, in the sense of invoking the activity being explicated. This shows that it is impossible to give a *reductive* account of such activities, but it does not show that it is impossible to give an account that is *informative*. Ps.-Simplicius’ account of judging is clearly informative. For instance, it makes non-trivial claims about the kind of *sunesis* that is exercised in judging and about what it is for that *sunesis* to be exercised successfully.

\[\text{(b) Is it plausible to suppose that merely judging something to be the case requires the exercise of such a sophisticated power?}\]

On ps.-Simplicius’ account, in making a judgement you must judge your judgement-making capacity to be functioning well. It might be objected that such an account over-intellectualizes judgement. Surely, there are many people who make judgements but would be mystified if asked whether their judgement-making capacity was functioning well. In response to this, ps.-Simplicius could say two things. First, you can be judging that your capacity for judgement is functioning well without necessarily being able to express your judgement in quite those terms. Judging that this capacity is functioning well *just is* judging that your judgement is warranted. That requires you to have some grasp of what it is for a judgement to be warranted, but it does not require you to have a philosophical account of the nature of different cognitive powers. Second, ps.-Simplicius would, I think, simply accept the consequence that judging is not possible for someone who lacks the ability to think about whether her judgements are justified. This is, after all, an account designed to explain why animals cannot make judgements. Ps.-Simplicius agrees with the Stoics that neither animals nor young children are capable of the relevant kind of assent.

\[\text{(c) Are there cases in which you make a judgement without taking your judgement to be warranted?}\]

It might seem that ps.-Simplicius’ account of judgement is vulnerable to counter-examples. There are cases in which we are willing to describe people as ‘judging’ or as ‘believing’, even though they do not seem to satisfy the conditions laid down by ps.-Simplicius’ account.
It is certainly possible to judge that $P$ while judging that your general capacity for determining whether $P$ is unreliable. For instance, you might judge that Labour will win the next election while acknowledging that you are not very good at predicting such things. This, I think, is not a counter-example. As we have seen, when ps.-Simplicius says that in making a judgement you must endorse the understanding you are exercising, he does not mean that you must take yourself to be exercising a capacity for judgement that is generally reliable. To endorse your understanding is to take it to be achieving truth by functioning well in this instance, and hence to take yourself to be justified in so judging. You cannot judge that Labour will win the next election while acknowledging that your judgement is completely unwarranted. That would be guessing, not judging.

The possibility of having repressed beliefs might also be thought to provide a potential counter-example. If you can believe that $P$ without having any conscious access to this belief, then you can (presumably) unconsciously believe that $P$ while consciously judging that this belief is unwarranted. Perhaps, however, ps.-Simplicius could allow for this. He could maintain that when you unconsciously believe that $P$ you must also unconsciously believe that you are justified in believing that $P$. The fact that you can at the same time consciously judge that you have no justification for believing $P$ merely shows that your conscious judgements can contradict your unconscious beliefs.

Certain types of irrationality might seem to provide a different kind of counter-example. We do sometimes say things like ‘I can’t help believing this, even though I know I’m not justified in doing so’. If you are afraid of flying, you might find yourself ‘judging’ that the aeroplane you are on will crash, even while recognizing that it is not reasonable so to judge. If you are an optimist, you might find you cannot help ‘believing’ that ‘something will turn up’, even while you acknowledge that all the evidence points the other way.

To this, I think, ps.-Simplicius would reply that in spite of the language we sometimes use to describe such cases, they are not really examples of genuine judging or believing. They are, rather, cases in which people behave in certain respects as if they have the relevant belief, without actually having it. The fearful flier does not assent to the claim that the aeroplane will crash and hence does not believe it will crash, but she has the kind of panicked reaction that
would normally arise from such a belief. The optimist does not believe that something will turn up, but he has the sunny disposition one would expect such a belief to engender.

The use of the words ‘belief’ and ‘judgement’ in such cases is merely evidence of a certain looseness in our language. Ps.-Simplicius is giving an account not of the way in which people use the word ‘doxa’ (‘belief’), but rather of what it is to hold something to be true or take something to be the case. He himself makes this clear when he notes that the word ‘doxa’ is sometimes used (by Iamblichus, for instance) for a kind of non-rational cognition: ‘the cognition of what is superficial and seems to be’ (309. 34–6). This use of the word is not, he says, evidence of any real disagreement between Iamblichus and Aristotle (or between Iamblichus and ps.-Simplicius): Iamblichus would agree that one must exercise a rational power in taking something to be the case; when he describes a kind of non-rational cognition as doxa, he is simply not using the word ‘doxa’ to mean belief that something is the case.}

7. Some consequences of this account of assent: believing at will and reason-responsiveness

I have claimed that this account can help to answer our questions about the reason-responsiveness of assent. This claim might at first seem surprising. Ps.-Simplicius follows Aristotle in arguing that belief (doxa) does not depend on us: it is not eph’ hēmin (206. 30–5, commenting on DA 3. 3, 427b16–21). Prima facie, this looks like a rejection of the Stoic view that assenting depends on us, and hence also of the view that assenting is, in a special sense, reason-responsive. However, the disagreement here is only verbal. Ps.-Simplicius’ point is simply that we cannot believe at will, which is something the Stoics never meant to deny. In fact, I shall argue

92 Ps.-Simplicius could also have cited Plato’s use of ‘δόξα’ at Rep. 10, 602 ε–603 Α, which suggests that someone who is subject to a perceptual illusion has two contradictory δόξαι. In such a case, for example, you might have a non-rational δόξα that the stick in water is bent and a rational δόξα that the stick is straight. Clearly, the non-rational δόξα here would not be something that ps.-Simplicius (or Aristotle) would call a δόξα.

93 In this, ps.-Simplicius is following Aristotle. Imagining, Aristotle says, depends on us whenever we wish (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ἐστιν, ὅταν βουλομένη, 427b18). As Ian McCreary-Flora remarks, Aristotle’s point is that belief is, in this respect, unlike imagination: ‘we cannot form beliefs simply because we want to’ (‘Aristotle and the Normativity of Belief’ ['Normativity'], Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 44
that the very feature of ps.-Simplicius’ account that enables it to explain the impossibility of assenting (and hence believing) at will also provides a basis for explaining the way in which our capacity for assent is reason-responsive.\textsuperscript{94}

Ps.-Simplicius’ defence of the claim that we cannot believe at will is often thought to be hopelessly confused. McCready-Flora (following Barnes) provides the following reconstruction: ‘Whether a given belief is true or false is set by the facts. A belief that $p$ (for some proposition $p$) is true given that $p$ and false given that not-$p$. We do not, in general, control what the facts are, and therefore it is not up to us whether we have a true belief or a false belief. The truth and falsehood of any given belief is a semantic necessity, not subject to our wishes. Belief is, therefore, not up to us.’ As McCready-Flora goes on to say, ‘This argument fails . . . because imaginings also have truth-values.\textsuperscript{95}

We can, I think, credit ps.-Simplicius with a better argument if we consider his remarks against the background of his more general account of assent. He argues as follows:

πάσης γὰρ κοινὸν τὸ ἢ ἀληθεύειν ἢ ψεύδεσθαι, ἔπειδη ἐν αὐγκαταθέσει πάσα ὑπόληψις. ἡ δὲ αὐγκατάθεσις οὐ κατὰ μόνην τὴν τῶν προσπιπτόντων σύνεσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἀληθοῦς ἢ ψεύδους διάκρισιν, ἐν δὲ τῇ πρὸς τὰ πράγματα συμφωνίᾳ καὶ διαφωνίᾳ τὸ ἀληθὲς καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος· τὰ πράγματα δὲ οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν. (. –)

Telling truths or falsehoods is common to all [sc. hupolēpsis], since all hupolēpsis consists in assent, but assent is not only in accordance with the understanding [sunesis] of what impinges, but in accordance with the judgement of truth or falsehood. Truth and falsehood consist in agreement and disagreement with the facts, but the facts do not depend on us. (my translation)

If this is right, then the explanatory power of the account is, I think, a point in its favour. In saying this, I am not claiming to give a conclusive argument in its favour. I shall not, for instance, argue it is the only account that could provide such explanations. Nor do I mean to claim that ps.-Simplicius took himself to be making these points about the account’s explanatory power. Although he makes some brief remarks about the impossibility of believing at will, he does not address my questions about reason-responsiveness. This last section of my paper is, then, as much an exercise in drawing out the philosophical consequences of this account as it is an attempt at strict historical exegesis.

\textsuperscript{94} If this is right, then the explanatory power of the account is, I think, a point in its favour. In saying this, I am not claiming to give a conclusive argument in its favour. I shall not, for instance, argue it is the only account that could provide such explanations. Nor do I mean to claim that ps.-Simplicius took himself to be making these points about the account’s explanatory power. Although he makes some brief remarks about the impossibility of believing at will, he does not address my questions about reason-responsiveness. This last section of my paper is, then, as much an exercise in drawing out the philosophical consequences of this account as it is an attempt at strict historical exegesis.

\textsuperscript{95} McCready-Flora, ‘Normativity’, 85–6. McCready-Flora is here following Barnes, ‘Up to us’, 27–8. Barnes attributes this argument to both Aristotle and ps.-Simplicius. McCready-Flora claims that Aristotle himself had a better argument, but that ps.-Simplicius misinterpreted him.
Certainly the last two lines of this argument, taken by themselves, suggest the interpretation given by McCready-Flora and Barnes. But for a full understanding of what ps.-Simplicius is saying here, we need to grasp the significance of his remarks about the kind of *sunesis* that is exercised in assent and of his appeal to the notions of telling truths and falsehoods (*alētheuein* and *pseudesthai*).

Ps.-Simplicius takes the argument to apply not merely to belief (*doxa*) but to every *hypolēpsis* (or ‘rational cognition’, 206. 5).96 ‘*Hypolēpsis*’, he says, is a broader term than ‘*doxa*’, including within its scope also *epistēmē* and *phronēsis* (207. 18–22, commenting on Arist. *DA* 3. 3, 427b24–6).97 What distinguishes *hypolēpsis* from both perception and imagination is that it ‘tells truths or falsehoods’ (*ἢ ἀληθεύειν ἢ ψεύδεσθαι*). *Hypolēpsis* can tell truths or falsehoods just because it involves assent (206. 31–2). As I remarked earlier, ‘telling truths or falsehoods’ is *making true or false assertions about how things are* (not simply *being true or false*).98 That is why imagination does not count as ‘telling truths or falsehoods’. When you imagine things, they appear to you to be a certain way, but imagining does not involve making a claim about how things are.

As we have seen, ps.-Simplicius holds that *making a claim about how things are* is a matter of *assenting* to something, and that such assenting must be the exercise of a particular kind of power. It must be the exercise of the kind of rational *sunesis* that is capable of self-

---

96 As he makes clear at 206. 30–1: ‘“ὑπόληψις” is a broader term than “δόξα” but “δόξα” is here used to stand for all “ὑπόληψις”.’ Ps.-Simplicius is presumably influenced here by the remark with which Aristotle introduces this argument: δὴ δ’ οὖκ ἔστων ἢ αὐτή νόησις καὶ ὑπόληψις, φανερῶν (*DA* 427b16–17). Ps.-Simplicius takes ‘νόησις’ here to mean *phantasia* (206. 5–6), and hence takes Aristotle to be introducing this argument with the claim that *phantasia* is not the same as ὑπόληψις.

97 McCready-Flora (‘Normativity’, 86–8) makes it a condition on the interpretation of Aristotle’s argument here that the argument should apply only to belief. As McCready-Flora points out, Aristotle elsewhere says that our exercise of understanding does depend on us. This might, then, be thought to be an objection to ps.-Simplicius, at least in so far as he is attempting to provide an interpretation of Aristotle. However, there is, I think, a possible reply to McCready-Flora here. The sense of ‘depends on us’ in which understanding depends on us is rather different from the sense in which belief is said not to depend on us. The sense in which understanding depends on us is that we can exercise understanding or not at will. But something analogous also seems to be true of belief: I can call to mind a particular belief at will. On the other hand, the content of understanding is surely not something we can alter at will any more than we can believe at will. If you take the belief that *P* to be unwarranted, you cannot decide to *exercise understanding in thinking* that *P* any more than you can decide to believe that *P*.

98 See above, sect. 5, esp. n. 76.
reversion. In our passage he says that every *hupolēpsis* consists in assent (206. 32). Such assent, he says, is not simply in accord with the *sunesis* of what impinges (that is, the *sunesis* we have described as ‘perceptual’). It must also be in accord with one’s judgement of truth or falsity (truth and falsity being a matter of agreement or disagreement with the facts) (206. 32–5). These last remarks are, of course, very brief. But his other remarks about assent suggest the following view. In assenting, one makes a judgement about how things are. For this, the exercise of perceptual *sunesis* is not sufficient. In assenting, one must be exercising rational *sunesis* and moreover one must be taking oneself to be achieving truth in virtue of the correct functioning of that *sunesis*. Part of what it is to make a judgement is to take oneself to be achieving truth in virtue of being warranted in so judging.

If this is ps.-Simplicius’ point, it goes at least some way towards explaining why believing at will is not possible. If it were possible to believe that *P* at will, then you could consciously judge that *P* for reasons that you took to have nothing to do with whether or not ‘*P*’ was true. For instance, you could believe that *P* on the grounds that this belief would make you happier, while holding that this was in fact not a good ground for taking ‘*P*’ to be true. Ps.-Simplicius’ account (on the interpretation given here) shows why this is impossible. As we have seen, this account implies that in the act of judging that *P* you must take yourself to be achieving truth (that is, agreement with the facts) in virtue of the well-functioning of your *sunesis*. But this implies that in judging that *P* you must take yourself to be justified in so judging. You cannot take yourself to be justified in so judging while at the same time taking your judgement

99 Ps.-Simplicius himself encourages us to understand his argument here in the light of his further remarks about assent. For instance, when he later spells out his view that rational assent is essentially self-reverting (210. 10–211. 15), he introduces this discussion by saying ‘The difference between imagination and belief which is stated now seems to me to be the same as the one that was mentioned before. There believing was said not to depend on us because it necessarily involves telling falsehoods or truths, and here it is said that conviction always follows belief’ (210. 11–14).

100 Denying that we can believe at will is, of course, compatible with recognizing the possibility of wishful thinking: the possibility that our hopes and desires can influence what we believe without our realizing it.

101 Showing this is sufficient for showing that we cannot believe at will. However, a full account of why believing at will is impossible would have to explain why it is impossible to withhold assent from *P* while taking the judgement that *P* to be decisively justified by the evidence. Ps.-Simplicius’ account does not, I think, help to explain this.
that $P$ to be based on inadequate grounds, and hence to be unjustified (and of course, by the same token, you cannot make the meta-judgement that your judgement that $P$ is justified, while taking that meta-judgement to be unjustified). Thus, the fact that it is impossible to believe at will simply follows from the fact that judging essentially involves taking oneself to be justified in so judging.

In the special case in which your judgement is about some fact that depends on you, you have a kind of indirect way of bringing yourself to make that judgement. If you think you would be happier if you were to judge that you were singing, you can start singing, and then judge that you are singing. But of course, this does not involve judging that $P$ while recognizing that you are not warranted in so judging. You can bring yourself to judge that you are singing just because you can make it the case that you are warranted in so judging, and you can do this just because you can make it the case that you are singing. Most of our beliefs are not about things that depend on us, and so in most cases we cannot, even in this indirect way, alter our beliefs at will.

If I am right that this is how ps.-Simplicius’ account rules out the possibility of belief at will, the same considerations also provide a basis for answering our questions about reason-responsiveness. Again, it is the essentially self-reflexive nature of assent that is relevant. As we saw, Epictetus recognized that in order to count as assenting, you must be able to reflect on whether you should

My argument depends here on the assumption that it is impossible, at the same time, to make two obviously contradictory judgements. For some discussion see n. 105 below.

This also gives ps.-Simplicius an answer to a version of Moore’s paradox. Moore raises a puzzle about assertions such as ‘$P$, but I am not justified in judging that $P$’. An assertion of this sort is defective in some way, but its content is not inconsistent (since ‘$P$’ and ‘I am not justified in judging that $P$’ can both be true). In what way, then, is it defective? Ps.-Simplicius’ answer is that when you express a judgement by saying ‘There is a blackbird in the garden’, this only partially expresses your judgement. Fully expressed, your judgement is ‘There is a blackbird in the garden and I am justified in making this judgement’. But this implies ‘I am justified in judging that there is a blackbird in the garden’ (since if you are justified in making the whole judgement, you must be justified in making each part of it). So your judgement, if fully expressed, is in fact inconsistent with ‘I am not justified in judging that there is a blackbird in the garden’.

Of course, this does not rule out the possibility of altering one’s beliefs in an even more indirect way, by voluntarily undergoing a process of education, training, or indoctrination. In denying that belief depends on us, neither Aristotle nor ps.-Simplicius means to rule out the possibility of bringing oneself to have new beliefs in this indirect way.
be assenting and to reaffirm or revise your assent in the light of such reflection. His account, however, left unexplained the relation between re-evaluating your assent and revising or reaffirming that assent in the light of this re-evaluation. It did not explain why, when you conclude your assent is not justified, you thereby cease to assent. Here the account I have attributed to ps.-Simplicius provides the basis for an answer. As we have seen, on this account you not merely can, but necessarily do, engage in a certain kind of reflection on any act of assent. Your endorsement of your assent is built into the very act of assent itself: your act of judging that \( P \) includes, as part of its content, the judgement that you are justified in so judging. This explains why, if you re-evaluate your act of judging that \( P \) and conclude that you are not justified in so judging, you thereby cease to judge that \( P \). Continuing to judge that \( P \) would involve making two obviously contradictory judgements: the judgement that you are justified in judging that \( P \) (made as part of your act of judging that \( P \)) and the judgement that you are not justified in so judging.\(^{105}\)

The fact that assent (and hence judgement) is responsive in this way to higher-order evaluation also explains the possibility of judging for a reason. You only count as judging that \( P \) on the grounds that \( Q \) if your act of judging that \( P \) depends in a certain way on your taking the fact that \( Q \) to provide good grounds for so judging. For instance, you only count as judging on the basis of the weather forecast that there will be rain if you take the forecast’s prediction to provide good grounds for judging that there will be rain and you judge as you do because of this.\(^{106}\) This implies that were you to

---

\(^{105}\) Though one cannot simultaneously make two obviously contradictory judgements, one can simultaneously have an impression that \( P \) and an impression that not \( P \) (as, for instance, in the waterfall illusion, when one has the impression both that the rocks are moving and that they are not moving). A full account of judgement would also need to explain this difference between judging and having impressions. The account we have outlined has something to contribute here too, since it shows there is an important difference between judging that \( P \) and not \( P \) and having the impression that \( P \) and not \( P \). On this account, in judging that \( P \) and not \( P \), you would have to take yourself to be achieving truth in virtue of the well-functioning of your judgment-making capacity. By contrast, having the impression that \( P \) and not \( P \) does not involve taking yourself to be achieving truth in virtue of the well-functioning of your impression-having capacity.

\(^{106}\) For the fact that \( Q \) to count as your reason for judging that \( P \), your taking the fact that \( Q \) to be a good reason for so judging must have the right kind of explanatory connection to your judging that \( P \). It is hard to spell out just what this explanatory connection is. Not just any causal connection will do. Your judgement that \( P \) could
become convinced of the unreliability of the forecast, you would either revise your judgement or find new grounds for it. That is, it implies that your judging is responsive to a certain kind of higher-order reflection on whether it is justified by its grounds. Again, this is just what ps.-Simplicius’ account (as I have interpreted it) would predict. On that account, making a judgement essentially involves endorsing the *sunesis* exercised in that judgement; when the judgement is based on reasons, endorsing the *sunesis* exercised in that judgement just is taking those reasons to warrant making that judgement.\(^\text{107}\)

Your impressions are not, in the same way, responsive to higher-order evaluation. This is because having an impression does not essentially involve either endorsing the content of that impression or taking the impression to be the exercise of a capacity that is functioning correctly. Thus, although you might in fact cease to have a certain impression as a result of judging that the capacity that led you to have that impression was not functioning correctly, when this happens it is simply the result of a causal relation between that

be caused by your *taking the fact that Q to be a good reason for judging that P though your judgement was not based on the grounds that Q*. On the other hand, the required explanatory connection (between your judging that P and your *taking the fact that Q to be a good reason for so judging*) cannot be that your *reason for judging that P* is the (presumed) fact that *the fact that Q is a good reason for so judging*. Such a condition on *judging for a reason* would give rise to an unacceptable infinite regress: it would imply that any judgement based on a reason was based on infinitely many reasons. In order to judge that P on the grounds that Q, you would also have to judge that P on the grounds that *the fact that Q was a good reason for so judging*, and you would also have to judge that P on the grounds that *the fact that the fact that Q was a good reason for so judging* was a good reason for so judging, and so on. (For modern discussions see P. Boghossian, ‘What is Inference?’, *Philosophical Studies*, 169 (2014), 1–18, and R. Neta, ‘What is an Inference?’, *Philosophical Issues*, 21.1 (2013), 388–407.) On the account I have attributed to ps.-Simplicius, this condition on judging for a reason is simply a special case of the more general condition on judging: if you judge that P, you must take yourself to be warranted in so judging and judge that P *because* of this. The ‘because’ here is a kind of essential ‘because’: you only *count* as judging that P if, as part of that very act of judging, you take yourself to be warranted in so judging.

\(^{107}\) For a full answer to our questions about the difference between assenting and having impressions it would be necessary also to explain the possibility of *withholding assent for a reason*. Ps.-Simplicius does not himself give an account of withholding assent. If we extrapolate from what he says about assenting, we might expect him to claim that withholding assent essentially involves judging oneself justified in withholding assent. Since the capacity in virtue of which we withhold assent just is our capacity for assenting (and hence for judging), it is at least possible for withholding assent to be related in this way to making a certain judgement. However, the attempt to spell out such a view in detail would take us far beyond anything in ps.-Simplicius.
impression and that act of judgement: there is nothing about the nature of the impression itself that ensures you will cease to have the impression when you make such a judgement.

8. Conclusion

In this paper we have seen how ps.-Simplicius draws upon the Neoplatonic notion of self-reversion to explain the nature of rational assent. I have argued that this account of assent provides a basis for explaining a fundamental difference between assenting and having impressions: the fact that we can assent for a reason but cannot (in the same sense) have an impression for a reason.

Ps.-Simplicius’ account thus suggests an interesting new view of the nature of assent, a view that combines elements of Aristotelian, Stoic, and Neoplatonist thought. From the Stoics, he inherits the view that believing involves assenting. He draws upon the Neoplatonist notion of self-reversion to explain the essentially self-reflexive nature of assent. This enables him to defend Aristotle’s claim that we cannot believe at will. On this account, though we do not believe at will, we nevertheless have a kind of rational control over our beliefs: beliefs, by their very nature, are such as to be revised or maintained for reasons. This account thus provides an answer to the question we raised for the Stoics: what is it about the nature of assent that explains why you are responsible for assenting in a way in which you are not responsible for having impressions? You are responsible for assenting just because you can assent (or withhold assent) for reasons, and you can assent for reasons just because of the essentially self-reflexive nature of the act of assent.

Corpus Christi College, Oxford

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnes, J., ‘“Belief is up to us”’ ['Up to us'], Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 106 (2006), 189–206.


How do we perceive objects? How is it that we perceive the familiar external middle-sized three-dimensional things we encounter in our everyday experience, such as humans, dogs, horses, chairs, and tables? The question presents philosophers with a considerable challenge. Objects are demanding, or at any rate they seem so when considered from the perspective of a theory of perception such as Aristotle’s. Aristotle, like most philosophers before and after him, argues that there is a direct causal interaction between us, the perceivers, and the things we perceive. Now it is easy to see how this can work in the case of the hearing of sounds or seeing of colours, and in the other cases in which there are external sensory stimuli that act on our sense organs. However, in the case of tables, chairs, horses, and the like this does not seem so easy. For suppose you hear a bell. It is not immediately clear how the bell you are hearing causally acts on your perceptual apparatus as a bell. Rather, it seems that what acts on your perceptual apparatus is the sound the bell emits. But that sound is not the bell, it is something that belongs to the bell. How, then, is it that you hear the bell? Can it be perceived at all? Note that the problem extends more widely than just the perception of 3-D objects. It concerns the perception of everything that is complex and not immediately corresponding to external sensory stimuli.

Many scholars agree that what is distinctive about Aristotle’s take on the problem is that he thinks the capacity of perception is sufficient for the awareness of such complex content—without the aid of
our rational capacities, that is, as Plato seems to have claimed in the *Theaetetus*.\(^2\) This, if correct, means that Aristotle assigns the demanding job of somehow processing the various perceptual stimuli so as to render a perception of 3-D objects to a *non-rational capacity*. To give a plausible account of his theory of perception is no easy task precisely for the challenge this poses, namely to explain how perception can do this job without the aid of higher cognitive capacities.

Anna Marmodoro’s *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* takes on that challenge. The book offers an interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of perception that agrees with the thesis that he explains the awareness of 3-D objects such as horses, bells, and the like with the powers of perception alone. The centrepiece of her argument is a new, ambitious, and controversial interpretation of the so-called common sense (*koine aisthēsis*), according to which the common sense is endowed with special perceptual powers on its own that are very different from the powers of the five special senses, and that make it the capacity responsible for the more complex forms of perceptual awareness, including the perception of 3-D objects. Her book is written with unusual verve and formidable ambition. It sets out to solve the most difficult problems in Aristotle’s theory of perception, and it promises to do so in the best philosophical spirit, namely by cutting reality ‘at its joints’ at the most fundamental level, which, according to Marmodoro, is the level of the metaphysics of powers. Accordingly, her argument starts with a metaphysical discussion of Aristotle’s conception of powers, causation, and change, and then applies the results to his theory of human perception.\(^3\) The outcome is a highly innovative, at times almost dazzling array of fresh, often controversial, and unfailingly thought-provoking, discussions of a whole plethora of issues in Aristotle’s metaphysics and theory of perception. Indeed, the book is so rich and demanding that I find

\(^2\) In the *Theaetetus* the cognition of complex perceptual content is said to require an awareness of relative notions such as sameness and difference, and thus presupposes some measure of rational thought (184 d ff.). The difference between Plato and Aristotle in this regard has been emphasized by R. Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (London, 1993), 7 ff. See P. Gregoric, *Aristotle on the Common Sense* [*Common Sense*] (Oxford, 2007), 2 ff.

\(^3\) pp. 78, 80. This limitation to humans is problematic. Aristotle’s account of perception in the *De anima* is clearly intended to be commensurately universal with all perceivers, as it, like all scientific argumentation, proceeds from the more universal to the more specific (*DA* 1. 1, 402a5–10; cf. *PA* 1. 1, 639b15–b5; 1. 4, 644a25–b15, *Post. An.* 1. 4, 73b25–74a3; 1. 5, 74b32–b4).
it virtually impossible to describe its contents with due accuracy in this limited space. In view of this, the present discussion aims at the rather modest goal of identifying and assessing the main and basic argumentative thread of *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects*. As the book is already drawing some attention, I hope readers will find the discussion useful. I start with the metaphysical framework (Section 1), then move on to Marmodoro’s account of modally specific perception (Section 2), and end with an assessment of her views on complex perceptual content and object perception (Section 3).

1. The metaphysical framework: powers and the causation of change

According to *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects*, all powers (*dunameis* generally) are causal properties. Either they bring about change in something else or they allow their bearers to suffer change. All powers, therefore, are powers for change. Powers are paired with corresponding partner-powers. The active power to heat, for instance, is paired with the passive power of being heated, such that for each active power there is a corresponding passive power and vice versa. Since there is this one-to-one correspondence between active and passive powers, there is also a one-to-one correspondence between each causal power and its effect. Thus, the power to heat causes heat in that which has the power to be heated. And as all things in nature are subject to change, there is a net of corresponding active and passive powers that encompasses the whole physical world. Marmodoro even goes so far as to claim that for Aristotle powers are the basic constituents (‘building blocks’) of physical reality: there is nothing categorical, i.e. nothing actually and manifestly existing, ‘anchoring the powers to reality’ (19). The perceptual property ‘red’, for instance, *just is* the power to cause a change in something else; it is *not* the categorical quality ‘red’ that *has* the power to cause change. On that basis Marmodoro claims that Aristotle has an ontology of pure (not categorically ‘anchored’) powers (65 n. 11). She conceives of the workings of powers as follows (34 ff. and before, extracting the account from a sustained discussion of change in *Physics 3*). For a pair of active and passive powers to be put to work, they need to have contact with each other. Once contact is established, they mutually activate each other’s ‘powerfulness’.
However, things do not stop there. Marmodoro claims that the mutual activation of the two partner powers constitutes a further and common activity over and above their own activities. Altogether there are three activities, then, the activity of the active power, the activity of the passive power, and ‘a composite (third) activity exemplifying two different types of sub-activity’ (62–3). Each of these activities remains essentially different from each other. Thus, the process of heating is constituted by the activity of the active power to heat (1), the activity of the passive power to be heated (2), and a third activity (3) that consists in the mutual activation of both (1) and (2). Each activation of a power is a ‘qualitative transition’ (34) that consists in the transition in the power itself from one metaphysical state to another. This presumably means the powers’ transitions from their metaphysical status of being potentially $F$ (e.g. heating or being heated) to the opposite metaphysical status of being actually $F$ (e.g. heating or hot (13)). Marmodoro distinguishes two different types of such power transitions (13 ff.), both of which are supposed to be changes: transitions of powers the activation of which is a process (kinēsis) and those the activation of which is an activity (energeia, praxis). The difference between them is that powers for processes lose their powerfulness when activated, as, for instance, the power to be heated loses that powerfulness in the degree in which it is realized, while powers for activity do not lose their powerfulness when activated, as, for instance, a child’s powerfulness to play soccer is not lost while engaged in playing soccer (her example). The one (the process) is a change of the constitutional makeup of the changing thing, the other (the activity) is a change that is an exercising, or a putting to work, of an already existing structure. Moreover, the activation of the powers for processes unfolds in time, while the activation of powers for activity is instantaneous. Furthermore, the activation of powers for processes shares a common material substratum (54, 61), while the co-ordinated powers for energeiai do not share a common material substratum. Rather, they share a substratum of a different kind, which Marmodoro calls their ‘activity-substratum’ (96). This, I take it, is (3) from above, i.e. the mutual activation of (1) and (2). These are the basic features of Marmodoro’s account of Aristotle’s metaphysical account of powers.\footnote{Marmodoro also says that all powers have goals (τέλη, namely their activations (13)), that ‘each power is at the same time both active and passive, since powers}
These are perplexing claims. And Marmodoro’s somewhat assertive style in presenting her views in this chapter does not make them easier to understand. She rarely takes time to explain her account to readers not familiar with the recent philosophical debate in the metaphysics of powers, nor does she explain all her interpretative decisions to the scholar of Aristotle. I begin with the most startling one, which is her first and basic move to conceive of all Aristotelian \textit{dunameis} as powers for change. Aristotle, as is well known, repeatedly and explicitly distinguishes between powers for change and powers of another kind, which are sometimes called powers for being.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Metaph. Θ} 1, 1046\textsuperscript{a}1–2, 1048\textsuperscript{b}25 ff., 1071\textsuperscript{a}8–10. Since Michael Frede’s article ‘Potentiality in Aristotle’s \textit{Metaphysics} \textit{Θ’}, in T. Scalsitas, D. Charles, and M. Gill (eds.), \textit{Unity, Identity, and Explanation in Aristotle’s \textit{Metaphysics}} (Oxford, 1994), 173–93, these passages have received a good deal of attention in recent scholarship, notably in three monographs: S. Makin, \textit{Aristotle’s \textit{Metaphysics} \textit{Θ}} (Oxford, 2006), J. Beere, \textit{Doing and Being: An Interpretation of Aristotle’s \textit{Metaphysics} \textit{Theta}} (Oxford, 2009), and A. Kosman, \textit{The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle’s Ontology} (Cambridge, Mass., 2013). For the history of the distinction see S. Menn, ‘The Origins of Aristotle’s Concept of \textit{ἐνέργεια}: \textit{ἐνέργεια} and \textit{δύναμις’}, \textit{Ancient Philosophy}, 14 (1994), 73–114.} Unfortunately, \textit{Aristotle on Perceiving Objects} does not contain a discussion of this important distinction. Now, in defence of Marmodoro’s decision to identify all \textit{dunameis} with powers for change, one could argue that, in his treatment of \textit{dunamis} and \textit{energeia}, Aristotle indeed introduces the notion of \textit{dunamis} in, as he calls it, its ‘strictest’ or ‘most authoritative’ meaning (\textit{μάλιστα κυρίως}, \textit{Metaph. Θ} 1, 1045\textsuperscript{b}36), which is the ‘starting-point of change in another thing or in the thing itself qua other’ (1046\textsuperscript{a}10–11).\footnote{The translations are from J. Barnes (ed.), \textit{The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation}, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1995), with slight modifications. I refrain from translating \textit{δύναμις} and \textit{ἐνέργεια}.} Hence, since the central and most authoritative meaning is \textit{dunamis} for change, there is reason for equating all \textit{dunameis} with powers for change. However, in that same discussion Aristotle also says that there is another meaning of \textit{dunamis}, not captured by the strictest or most authoritative meaning, and which moreover is ‘more useful’ for his investigation of \textit{dunamis} and \textit{energeia}:

First let us explain \textit{dunamis} in the strictest sense, which is, however, not the most useful \([χρησιμωτάτη]\) for our present purpose.\footnote{The other main family of manuscripts even reads \textit{χρησίμη}, i.e. ‘useful’.

For \textit{dunamis} and

operate on each other’ (40), that all properties are causal powers (125), and more. Unfortunately, there is no room to discuss these claims here.
energeia extend further than the mere sphere of change. But when we have spoken of this first kind, we shall in our discussions of energeia explain the other kinds of dunamis. (Metaph. Θ 1, 1045b35–1046a4)

One way of distinguishing these two kinds of dunamis is to say that the one is diachronic and the other synchronic. A thing with a diachronic dunamis cannot actualize and preserve that dunamis at the same time, as, for example, water that is becoming hot cannot at the same time preserve its power to become hot; in synchronic dunameis, by contrast, one and the same thing can at the same time be in actuality what it has the dunamis to be, as, for example, an actual horse that currently exercises its dunamis qua horse can at the same time preserve its dunamis for being a horse. In the former case dunamis and energeia relate as actual change relates to the power for change, in the latter as substance to matter.\(^8\) As mentioned above, Aristotle on Perceiving Objects does not discuss these passages. Having said that, however, I should add that I am not sure that Marmodoro’s account is not meant to cover synchronic dunameis as well. For, as we learn in a footnote, in her account she uses the term ‘change’ not in the Aristotelian, but ‘in our common sense’, usage:

In our common sense conception of change, both process and activity count as changes. What Aristotle wishes to capture by treating only process as change is that activity does not alter the constitutional makeup of the active agent, but only puts the existing constitution to work. (67 n. 21)\(^9\)

According to our common-sense conception of change, Marmodoro contends, Aristotelian activities are changes after all, only not the kind of changes that alter the ‘constitutional makeup’ of the active agent. This certainly sounds odd if applied to synchronous energeiai, such as, for instance, being a horse or being a thinking being. It becomes much more plausible, though, if we individuate the activities that constitute the life of a horse or a thinker in a more fine-grained way, such as, for example, seeing, thinking, and so on. But is it correct to say that Aristotle conceives of the activity of, for example, seeing as a change in which an existing constitutional makeup is put to work, whereas ordinary change alters the constitutional makeup of the changing thing? On Aristotle’s standard

\(^8\) Metaph. Θ 6, 1048b8–10.

\(^9\) Cf. 14: ‘Strictly speaking Aristotle associates change with processes only, because in the case of processes the resulting state is qualitatively different from the initial state.’
conception of change, for every change there is an underlying substrate that changes properties: \( x \) is \( F \) and changes from being \( F \) to being \( G \). This happens when \( F \) is potentially \( G \), which is the case only when \( F \) and \( G \) are contrary opposites in one of the three categories of place, quantity, and quality. Given this conception, we may ask what ‘constitutional makeup’ is altered in the case of a change in place. It seems to me that in standard scenarios of local change there is no such alteration. So that would be an example of a process which is not a change of a constitutional makeup.

Regarding the other thesis, that activities are changes after all, only not the kind of changes that alter the constitutional makeup of things, there is at least one seeming counter-example that would have needed to be accounted for. This is Aristotle’s account of the theoretical thinking of separate substances, where he makes it a point that its actuality is separate from matter, while its \textit{dunamis}, prior to its actualization, exists as a \textit{mere} potentiality. In this case, then, it seems that there is no previously existing constitution that can be put to work, but only a non-\( x \) which, apart from being potentially \( x \), is \textit{nothing} in actuality (ἐντελεχεία οὐδέν, \textit{DA} 3. 4, 429b31). Now there may be a way of construing this as a putting to work of already existing structures as well. But even if this should be the case, one would still like to understand how this justifies an \textit{identification} of the underlying processes with the \textit{energeia} of the states that they ‘put to work’. Whatever ‘our’ common-sense conception of change may be (and it is not entirely clear to me what this conception is), does it cover these Aristotelian ideas? It seems to me that it does not, unless everything \textit{that happens} counts as a change, and states, events, and changes amount to the same thing.

Another cluster of issues is raised by Marmodoro’s claim that powers are the fundamental items in Aristotle’s metaphysics of nature. Here I shall not try to evaluate the merits of power ontology as a guide towards understanding Aristotle’s physics, but focus instead on Marmodoro’s argument that, for Aristotle, physical properties \textit{are} (rather than \textit{have}) powers, and that powers (rather than primary substances and their categorical properties) are the ‘fundamental building blocks of reality’ out of which everything else in nature is built (6–9). We may represent her argument as follows:

(i) Powers are properties that bring about change or allow
their bearers to suffer change (Marmodoro’s definition of powers).

(ii) Everything in nature is built out of the elementary bodies fire, air, water, earth, or out of their mixtures.

(iii) The elementary bodies are built out of the elementary qualities ‘hot’, ‘cold’, ‘dry’, and ‘moist’.

(iv) The elementary qualities are said to be what they are in virtue of bringing about changes in something else or by allowing their bearers to suffer change (Marmodoro’s reading of GC 2. 2, 329b23–5).10

(v) Therefore, the elementary qualities are powers. (i, iv)

(vi) Therefore, everything in nature is built out of powers. (ii, iii, v)

This seems a non sequitur on two counts. First, the meaning of ‘built out of’ seems sufficiently different in (ii) and (iii) to render the conclusion in (vi) invalid. In (ii) ‘built out of’ has the sense of ‘having as a material constituent’ in the way in which, for example, bricks are material constituents of a house. This is the constitution relation as it applies to materially extended substances and their likewise materially extended parts (material constitution). Such material constituents can at least potentially exist separately from the whole of which they are parts. In (iii), by contrast, the meaning of ‘built out of’ seems different: qualities are not material constituents of extended bodies, because qualities cannot exist separately from the material substances they are the qualities of. This is because qualities are not material substances but properties of material substances. So, if elementary bodies are ‘built out of’ elementary qualities (a locution Aristotle does not use), the meaning of ‘built out of’ is different from the meaning it has in the case of material constituents.11 Owing to this ambiguity, the argument creates the impression that Aristotle constructs the material sub-

10 Misquoted on page 7 as GC 329b21–2. Her reading (which she does not argue for) is not the only one possible.

11 Perhaps unless one favours some version of a theory such as M. Furth’s, who claims that the underlying substrate for the coming to be of the elementary bodies out of each other in GC 2 is the elementary properties themselves (‘in a new linkage’, as he says in Substance, Form and Psyche: An Aristotelian Metaphysics (Cambridge, 1987), 225, albeit without claiming that the elementary qualities are more basic than the elementary bodies). However, Marmodoro does not say so, and even Furth emphasizes the dissimilarity between the elementary and the higher-level combinations (ibid.); see also n. 13 below. I would like to thank Victor Caston for reminding me of Furth’s interpretation in this context.
stances that constitute the physical world out of properties,\textsuperscript{12} which seems false.\textsuperscript{13} The second issue is that (v) seems to move from ‘having essential properties that are powers’ in (iv) to ‘being powers’, which does not follow either. If, for instance, an animal is said to be what it is in virtue of having the power of perception, it does not follow that the animal is the power of perception. Or, if a living body is said to be what it is in virtue of its soul, it does not follow that the living body is a soul, at least not without very important qualifications. Likewise, even if the elementary properties ‘hot’, ‘cold’, ‘moist’, and ‘dry’ are defined by their powers to act and be acted upon by each other, it does not follow that they are these powers. They still might very well be the categorical qualities ‘hot’, ‘cold’, ‘moist’, and ‘dry’ which are the bearers of their powers to act and be acted upon. Of course, both issues are related in that they prioritize powers to a degree that either denies or blurs the distinction between properties, powers, and their bearers. To be sure, this seems precisely Marmodoro’s point. But however we might want to evaluate her claim, the above argument does not establish it.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Cf. \textit{SE} 4, 165b30 ff.

\textsuperscript{13} In the third book of \textit{De caelo} Aristotle attacks (at great length) the similar thesis (in this respect) of Plato’s \textit{Timaeus}, that geometrical entities are basic constituents of the physical world. Of the plethora of arguments to be found there one applies directly to Marmodoro’s attempt at arguing that the elementary bodies are ‘built out of’ the elementary properties (and, if that should be his intention, also to Furth’s theory of interelemental change), namely that no combination of geometrical shapes can explain the continuity (\textit{συνεχές}) of physical bodies (\textit{De caelo} 3. 8, 306b22 ff.). For Aristotle the basic physical constituents of the world are the elementary bodies. The fact that they transform into each other by way of exchange of properties as described in \textit{GC} 2 does not make these properties more basic physical constituents than the elementary bodies.

\textsuperscript{14} An ontology of pure powers makes powers ontologically fundamental. Now this may or may not come with the further ambition of reducing the categorical properties of things to dispositional ones, and of thus making them more fundamental than categorical properties. In her account of Aristotelian powers Marmodoro takes a first and important step in this direction when she ‘reduces’ the \textit{ἐνέργεια} of \textit{F} to the state of full activation of \textit{F}’s \textit{powerfulness}. But this move, ingenious though it is, is a first step at most. To carry out a full interpretation of Aristotle’s ontology in terms of an ontology of pure powers would require showing how the categorical manifest qualities, quantities, and locations of things can be accounted for with reference to powers \textit{alone}, and how the supposed fundamentality of powers squares with his insistence on the priority of \textit{ἐνέργεια} over \textit{δύναμις}. It was not clear to me, however, whether Marmodoro actually subscribes to such a reductive programme. Perhaps she favours a mixed ontology on Aristotle’s behalf in which fundamental pure powers somehow coexist with likewise fundamental categorical properties. And in some version this seems a plausible view of Aristotle’s, who no doubt is an ontological realist about powers (as Plato was too). The point of contention would then merely be whether
I now turn to the workings of powers. As we have seen, Marmodoro’s conceptualization of all *dunameis* as powers for change results in an assimilation of the workings of *dunameis* for activities such as perceiving, thinking, etc. to the workings of ordinary powers for processes. Thus, we learn that all powers have coordinated partner powers, that the powers themselves undergo transitions from one metaphysical state to another, and that the mutual activation of powers for activities constitutes a common ‘activity-substratum’ analogous to the common material substratum of ordinary change. I shall briefly raise only a few questions in regard to three different clusters of issues. 

(a) In which sense can (3), the common activity constituted by the co-occurrence of the activities of (1) and (2), be regarded as a *substratum*? If (1) and (2)—the qualitative transitions of the active and the passive powers into their respective new metaphysical states—constitute a new and third entity (their ‘activity-substratum’), how is it that something new results from them? Why do the corresponding transitions of the powers for processes not result in the same, or similar, kind of new ‘activity-substratum’ but in a material substratum? *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* does not pause to address these questions.

(b) Neither does it pause to explain how synchronic *dunameis*, as, for example, the *dunamis* for being a dog or horse, can have corresponding partner powers. As substances do not have contraries, this seems a pressing question.

(c) The thought that powers can themselves engage in transitions, even if only from one metaphysical status to another, is worrisome, at least from the perspective of Aristotelian metaphysics. Non-metaphorical talk of powers that undergo changes\(^\text{15}\) creates the impression that there is an unobservable parallel world of changes that somehow mirrors the world of physical change. Is such a parallel world not something that Aristotle’s metaphysics struggles to avoid? To be sure, talk of powers that transition from one metaphysical status to another can be cashed out in more familiar

---

\(^{15}\) Marmodoro writes: ‘A power is powerful because of its relation to change—it can lead to change, or it engages in change that preserves it’ (6, emphasis added), and: ‘powers operate on each other’ (40, emphasis added). She also speaks of contact between powers, of a ‘qualitative transition’ of powers (34) and ‘metaphysical impact’ of powers on other powers (101).
and unspectacular terms when interpreted as the co-variation (or, if you prefer, ‘inverted co-variation’) of the transition from, say, being capable of heating to actually heating on the one hand, and the corresponding transition from being capable of being heated to actually being hot on the other. Taken in this way, talk of transitioning powers boils down to an expression of the fact that the air which surrounds the stove will lose its capacity of being heated in exactly the same measure in which it becomes actually hot, while the stove will lose its capacity actively to heat the air in exactly the same measure in which it exercises that capacity, but without making the capacities a subject of transition. However, Marmodoro nowhere indicates that she is speaking metaphorically.

These, I take it, are questions naturally raised by Marmodoro’s conceptualization of all dunameis as causal powers for change, and by her resulting tendency virtually to detach the activation of powers from their physical bearers (and thus to reify them as changes of the powers themselves). The argument of the first part of Aristotle on Perceiving Objects is much too brief and sketchy to persuade readers of this radically new picture of Aristotle’s metaphysics. I now turn to the application of this metaphysical framework to perception.

2. Applying the metaphysical framework to simple perception

As we have seen, Marmodoro conceives of change as the common activity of corresponding, and mutually interacting, active and passive powers. And since this common activity is supposed to be constituted by separate activities of the active and the passive powers (their transition from one metaphysical state to another), the two powers preserve their respective identities during the process. Applying this to the case of perceptual change results in the following picture. Perception is just one single process which, in the simplest case of modally specific perception of perceptual qualities such as ‘red’, ‘hot’ and so on, consists in a single common activity that is constituted by the activity of both the external perceptual quality as the active power and the activity of the faculty of perception as the corresponding passive one.

Two things are important here. First, the metaphysical connectedness of the co-ordinated partner powers secures the unity of the
process already on a metaphysical level: colours, for example, are the active powers to make themselves seen, and sight is the passive power to be affected by colours such as to see them. Second, the metaphysical connectedness of the active and the passive powers does not affect their separate identities: even though episodes of perception consist in their common activations, the essential being of each of the powers’ activations remains different. They are different even \textit{in type} (62–3), one being a physical and the other a mental power (94). In Marmodoro’s view, then, perception is the common activity constituted by the separate activities of the object and the perceptual faculty (111). This, basically, is the outcome of her reading of Aristotle’s famous ‘identity thesis’:

the actuality of the perceptible object and of the perceptual faculty are one, but they are different in being \ldots (\textit{DA} 3. 2, 426b15–17)\textsuperscript{16}

Marmodoro defends her reading in a spirited discussion of rival interpretations by Kosman, Caston, and Johansen (103 ff.; unfortunately there is no room to discuss this here). That reading has important consequences. Perhaps the most immediate consequence is that perceptual qualities cannot be fully actualized without being perceived and vice versa. Modally specific perceptual qualities are active powers that are metaphysically geared towards actualizing modally specific perceptual capacities, which are their corresponding passive powers. There is a ‘one-to-one correspondence’ between the perceptual quality, the stimulus of the sense organs, and the content of perceptual experience (84, 94, 158, 190). Being perceived realizes the full actuality of the perceptual object, and the full actuality of the perceiver vice versa realizes the actuality of the perceptual object; and both activities constitute the perceptual change. However, their mutual dependence does not amount to \textit{definitional interdependence}. Thus, the fact that the object of perception is fully actualized only while it is being perceived does not imply that it is \textit{defined} with reference to how it appears to perceivers:

For Aristotle the color, say, an object ‘achieves’ while being perceived is a high degree of activation of the \textit{object’s} color, rather than a mere representation of the object as colored. More generally, for Aristotle perceptible qualities are in the world such as we perceive them, but only while we per-

\textsuperscript{16} See also 425b25–7. The claim echoes Aristotle’s general discussion of change in \textit{Physics} 3. 3.
ceive them, because they require a perceiver in order to reach their fullest actualization. (102)

This idea of a metaphysical and causal interdependence of the object and the faculty of perception, which remain different in being and activity throughout, forms the basis of what Marmodoro calls Aristotle’s ‘subtle’ perceptual realism (125 ff.). In a way, this is a causal perceptual realism as direct as can be. There is an immediate, non-representational presence of the external perceptual qualities in the perceiving mind, but no definitional dependence of the object on the perceiving mind: the essence of colour, for example, is the power to cause its being seen; it is not seeing. Powers are geared towards the realization of their own powerfulness. ¹⁷ Thus, the world is objectively ‘colourful’ exactly in the way in which we perceive it. This ‘exactly’ comes with a series of significant qualifications, though. Marmodoro emphasizes that the world is exactly as we perceive it only while we perceive it, if we perceive it under normal conditions, and to the degree in which the one-to-one correspondence between quality, stimulus, and content of perceptual experience succeeds in assimilating the perceptual organ to the external quality: ¹⁸

the perceptible always makes the sense organ like it, because this is what the perceptible does when it interacts with the sense organ. But the degree of similarity that results between them is not always the same. The degree of similarity differs according to the state of the perceptible and of the organ. (135)¹⁹

And:

Although the form always makes the sense organ like it, it is veridically like it only when the perceptible, the environment, and the sense organ are in normal conditions. Perception is trustworthy then when it takes place in ‘standard’ or ‘normal’ conditions. (136)

This qualification, that the world is ‘fully’ colourful only while it is seen, and seen under the right conditions etc., makes her realism

¹⁷ Cf. 34: ‘The interdependence of the relative powers translates into their mutual qualitative transition to exercising their powerfulness.’

¹⁸ On page 141, in her (very short) comparison of her view with McDowell’s, Marmodoro says that in her account perceptual appearance is ‘not private’, even if ‘a unique interaction’. I could not make sense of that claim.

¹⁹ She illustrates the point nicely with the different effects one and the same act of teaching can have on different students (139–40).
‘subtle’: although the full actualization of a colour, for instance, depends on its interaction with a perceiver, the colour’s resulting appearance is exactly as it is in itself (everything going well).

This seems an attractive suggestion: it connects external perceptual qualities (colours, sounds, and so on) both metaphysically and causally per one-to-one correspondence with their perception, and at the same time makes them, such as they are, constituents of perceptual experience. I find this the most stimulating contribution of Aristotle on Perceiving Objects. I will have more to say about it below.

A second immediate consequence of Marmodoro’s account is that it conceives of episodes of perception strictly as just one single process: each perception is one single activity constituted by the activities of the active and the passive powers of perception, and not, as many interpreters have assumed, somehow two processes—one process which is an ordinary change, and in which an external perceptual object causally acts on the perceiver’s body, and another, which is either a quasi-change or a somehow supervening activity, in which the perceiver comes to be aware of that quality. In Marmodoro’s view there is just one active and just one passive power involved. The awareness of the colour is not the outcome of a different process: causally acting on the perceiver’s body is only a lesser degree of realization of the same power of making itself seen and whose fullest realization consists in making itself actually being seen. Her view thus promises to avoid the divide between causal process and perceptual awareness that structured the debate between literalists and spiritualists on Aristotle’s theory of perception. However, as we will see below, unfortunately, Marmodoro’s own explanation of how the senses ‘take on’ the perceptual object without matter does not spell out in sufficient detail how the proposed metaphysical framework is supposed to apply in this case. She spends a mere eight pages on that important question (111–18).

Before I come to discuss her causal account of perception and ‘subtle’ realism in more detail, I should emphasize that Marmodoro extends the parallelism between the active and the passive powers of perception also to their different stages of actuality. Accordingly, she claims that there is a first and a second actuality not only of the power of perception, but also of the perceptual qualities.\(^\text{20}\) Again,
this provides her with the means to solve a problem in the interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of perception which, though important, has not always been given due attention by scholars. The problem arises from the fact that perception, to put it in Victor Caston’s terms, is ‘about the very thing that brings it about’, i.e. that Aristotle assigns both causal and formal features to perceptual qualities but without telling us how these features are supposed to relate to each other. In the De anima he says that it is of the nature of, for example, colours to impart motions in the transparent medium that result in their being seen by a perceiver, but he also says that perceptible qualities are proportions of the extreme values on their respective qualitative scales (colours, for example, are proportions of light and dark). These features seem to belong to different types. The former are causal and part of the causal ancestry of perception, the latter seem part of an analysis of colours such as they are seen. This confronts interpreters with the following dilemma: either one identifies these two features and says that the formal properties of perceptual qualities—proportions (logoi)—have efficient causal force so as to literally impart motion in physical bodies; or one must deny that there is such an identity and say that both features merely coincide in one and the same perceptual quality. Marmodoro, by gestive of this. As far as the explicit textual evidence goes, Aristotle speaks about second actualities only with respect to the exercise of acquired capacities that in one way or another involve cognition (however, not with regard to the capacity of φαντασία: see M. V. Wedin, Mind and Imagination in Aristotle (New Haven, 1988), 57). He thus may think of all perceptible, but not actually perceived, objects as potential objects but without attributing to them different kinds of actuality. Marmodoro cites only one passage as evidence for the attribution of a first actuality to a perceptual object by Aristotle, but that passage hardly counts as solid evidence. It is taken from the notoriously difficult DA 3. 5, and it makes that claim at best in an indirect way: ‘For in a way also the light makes the potentially existing colours actual colours’ (τρόπον γάρ τινα καὶ τὸ φῶς ποιεῖ τὰ δυνάμει ὄντα χρώματα ἐνεργείᾳ χρώματα, 430a15–17). Apart from not saying that there is a first (or a second) actuality of colour, it is not clear that this passage is not talking about the role of light in the context of perception of colours.


22 In the De anima Aristotle talks of κινητικός (‘capable of setting up motion’) or ποιητικός (‘capable of bringing about’), or sometimes of both (as in 3. 2, 426a4–5). Colour: 2. 7, 418b31–b2, 419a2–4, 419a13–15; sound: 2. 7, 419b25–7; 2. 8, 420a3–5; smell: 2. 7, 419b25–7; taste: 2. 10, 422a17–10, 422b2–3, 423b15–16; touch: 2. 11, 423b12–20, 423b31–424a2. Descriptions of perceptual objects in terms of proportions are to be found in DA 2. 12, 424a17–24; 3. 2, 426b3–7; and De sensu 3, 440b18–25; cf. De sensu 6, 445b20 ff. (ll. 4–5).

23 Thus, Silverman suggests accounting for their relation in terms of essential fea-
contrast, makes these two types of feature correspond to different stages in the actualization of \textit{one and the same power}. Her ‘Multi-Stage-Powers View’ (130) avoids the dilemma:

In the case of the capacity to make a sound, a subject may have this capacity without exercising it; it may make an audible sound, in absence of anyone hearing (first actuality); or it may be sounding (second actuality) while—and only while—being heard. Thus, sounding is an object’s capacity to produce sound, in second actuality. While an object’s capacity to produce sound can be activated independently of anyone perceiving it, an object’s sounding depends on the activation of the corresponding perceptual power in the perceiver. (131; cf. 133)

However, as Marmodoro’s strategy of avoiding the dilemma is based on her metaphysical account of perception as a \textit{direct} causal interaction of active and passive perceptual powers, it seems vital that the contact between these powers be immediate as well; mediated forms of contact would make a \textit{mutual} interaction of the active and passive powers difficult (see page 40). Hence, intermediate stages in the process of causation of perception may seem to pose a serious threat to her theory. For if the transmission of the perceptual form by a medium and the affection of the sense organ are \textit{changes} (in the sense of processes, \textit{kinēseis}), as Aristotle says they are, it seems to follow that there is no \textit{direct} interaction between the power of the object and the power of perception, but only a mediated series of changes. And that could be seen to have the further consequence of rendering the perception of perceptual qualities not as they are in themselves, but only as they impact on their media and sense organs. Marmodoro bites the bullet and denies that perception involves changes in the medium or the perceptual organ (‘absence of change thesis’ in what follows); perceptual qualities, she says, merely ‘causally engage’ with their media, causing merely a ‘disturbance’ in them, while the media likewise merely ‘causally engage’ with the sense organs:

tures (the phenomenal features) and their \textit{per se} accidents (efficient causal features): A. Silverman, ‘Color and Color-Perception in Aristotle’s \textit{De anima}, Ancient Philosophy, 9.2 (1989), 271–92 at 272. Aristotle’s language is compatible with the idea that the causal and the formal features of perceptual qualities relate in the way in which formal and efficient causal features relate as different powers that coincide in the same thing. But for Marmodoro this is not a viable option, as she identifies perceptual qualities with powers (see sect. 1 above).
Aristotle allowed himself two alternative courses for the activation of causal powers: mere activation of a power, or activation-cum-change of a power. The theory of the perceptual medium takes this distinction from Aristotle’s power ontology to a higher level of complexity and sophistication. We can outline it as follows. The color of an object causally engages the actually transparent air (i.e. the medium) without changing it. The air in turn causally engages the sense organ of sight, the eye, without changing it, but giving rise to the perceptual experience of the object’s color. So the perceiver perceives the color itself, because her experience of it is the result of a chain of activations of causal powers, without change, started by the color itself (similarly with all other senses). (144–5)

This is a bold move and I think also more than her account requires. To start with, one might think that, on the face of it, the absence of change thesis contradicts Aristotle’s frequent statements that the perceptual object inflicts change (κινήσις) on the media and sense organs. Marmodoro wants to forestall this objection by saying that the only ‘change’ that is going on is precisely the ‘commuting’ of the perceptual form through the medium to the perceiver (149), and that, she argues, is not a change:

The role of the medium then is to be a causal ‘bridge’ between the sensible and the sense organ detecting it, for the transmission of what I call a ‘disturbance’. The color ‘disturbs’ the actively transparent medium, without changing it, and this disturbance is transferred to the sense organ, without changing it, but giving rise to the experience of the perceiver. The ‘disturbance’ that color generates cannot be merely a causal engagement with, for example, the air, since it cannot take place without light. A disturbance may be either physical dislocation or qualitative engagement without change. For example, the bending of a tree’s leaves in the wind, or the reflection of an image on a shiny metal surface are qualitative causal engagements of the leaves or the metal surface, without change (in the relevant Aristotelian sense). Either way, a color engages causally with the actually transparent medium—air or water—and through this medium it engages the sense organ of sight, producing the experience of color. (146–7)

According to Marmodoro, the medium is a reliable causal bridge between the active and the passive powers of perception in virtue of the fact that it remains unchanged by the perceptual qualities it mediates. All that happens is a ‘causal engagement’ in a way similar

24 Aristotle is very clear that perception involves qualitative changes (ἀλλοιώσεις) both in the media and in the sense organs, and that qualitative changes are changes (κινήσεις): e.g. DA 2. 5, 416b33–5; 3. 12, 434b27–435a10; Phys. 7. 2, 244b2 ff. For the individual senses see n. 22 above.
to the ways in which leaves of a tree remain unaffected by their locomotion from one place to the other or a metal surface remains unchanged by a reflection that takes place on it. Now it is right that Aristotle does not think of the changes in the media and sense organs as permanent. But that does not imply they are not changes. If local change is the change of a subject from one place to the other, as it seems to be for Aristotle, it is hard to see how we can avoid classifying the leaves’ shaking in the wind as a local change. And the other example of the qualitative change on a shiny metal surface seems no different. If qualitative change is the transition from one quality to the other in an underlying substrate, which in the case of colours is surfaces, a visible reflection on a metal surface should count as a straightforward qualitative change as well. What Marmodoro wants to rule out is ‘change’, not in the Aristotelian sense (although she writes this on page 147), but in the sense of a ‘persisting’ change in location or quality. However, persistence is not a criterion for counting as a change in Aristotle. To make sense of what Marmodoro has in mind here we might have to bring in her previous distinction between changes that alter the ‘constitutional makeup’ of the changed thing and those that do not. And in the case of the distal senses it seems right that there are no such alterations involved (even though one might puzzle over how to determine at which point exactly an audible change in the air counts as an alteration of its constitutional makeup: what makes a continuous mass of air struck in an audible way different from a wind? One would like to hear more about what ‘constitutional makeup’ is supposed to mean here). But does it also hold in the case of tangible changes? If I put my hand on a hot stove, why should the resulting change in my flesh (the medium of touch) not count as a change of its constitutional makeup? But let us suppose that all the media do not alter in this way in virtue of their transmitting perceptual forms. Would that justify the introduction of a terminological distinction between causal engagements and change that cuts across Aristotle’s own distinctions? I suspect what leads Marmodoro to state her absence of change thesis is the belief that its denial would entail that perceptual forms belong to the media in the same way in which they belong to the perceptible objects. She at least freely moves back and forth between these two issues as if they were the same. Thus, she writes:

25 As she writes on page 115.
26 See p. 67 n. 21, and the discussion on pp. 294–5 above.
In sum, Aristotle allows that in perception the medium is causally af-
lected . . . but the effect is only the ‘commuting’ of the form of the per-
ceptible. The perceptible form is neither perceived by the medium, nor
does it come to belong to the medium as a subject (in the way it belongs to
the object of perception). (149)

But these two issues can, and I think should, be kept apart. Say-
ning that the changes in the medium do not embody the perceptual
forms they transmit is perfectly compatible with saying that they
are genuine Aristotelian changes (processes). One only has to dis-
tinguish between changes in the medium and the perceptual forms
they carry, as, for example, in the case of the movement of the air
and the audible form it carries.27 ‘The sounds’ power to cause the
activation of the faculty of hearing may be the potential sound (as
Marmodoro says). But the fact that the air undergoes a change in
virtue of carrying the audible form—audible sounds are transmitted
by portions of air struck in certain ways—need not alter the sound
(provided there are no interfering violent changes), nor does it re-
quire that the sound belongs to the air in the same way in which
it belongs to the audible objects. It also does not threaten to inter-
rupt the direct causal interaction between the active and the pas-
see powers of perception. In other words, it seems the absence of
change thesis is an unnecessary burden for Marmodoro’s account.
Her thesis is all the more surprising as she elsewhere in the book
adopts a model of how to think of the relation between percep-
tual form and movement in the medium that makes the absence of
change thesis superfluous. This is Theodore Scaltsas’s ‘encoding
model’. In a 1996 article he suggests conceiving of the movements
in the air as possessing the audible form only in the very attenuated
sense of being able to cause the corresponding hearing experience in
the perceiver: the audible form is encoded in a certain structure,
sequence, or pattern, with which the air is struck.28 Scaltsas help-
fully compares this way of transmitting perceptual forms with Aris-
otle’s explanation for the transmission of the human form in sexual
reproduction: the movements of the male semen do not embody
the human form, but are structured according to a certain pattern
that has the power of causing the coming to be of a human foetus

27 As Aristotle does at DA 2. 12, 424b10–12.
28 T. Scaltsas, ‘Biological Matter and Perceptual Powers in Aristotle’s De anima’
[‘Biological’], Topoi, 14 (1996), 25–37. I was surprised, therefore, to find Marmodoro
saying that her interpretation of the role of the medium ‘thus follows’ Scaltsas (149).
in a suitable recipient. This seems a viable way of reconciling the idea that there is genuine change in the medium with Marmodoro’s thesis that there is direct interaction between the power to produce perception and the perceptual faculty.

I now turn to Marmodoro’s explanation of how the senses ‘take on’ the perceptual object without matter. She suggests conceiving of it as a ‘blending interaction’ between two forms, namely the form of the perceptible quality and the form of the sense organ:

The disturbance caused by a perceptible quality in the sense organ does not bring about a (persisting) change in the sense organ. Rather, the sense organ, which has its own form [which is a sort of harmonious mean, KC], registers the disturbance brought about by the perceptible quality by a blending interaction between its own form and the disturbances suffered. (116)

In illustrating her thesis she elaborates on an analogy made by Scaltsas in that same article. There he suggested conceiving of the act of perception as an emergent property of the body in a way similar to the way in which a sound emerges from the consonance and pitch of the strings of a lyre when a chord is struck.29 Her elaboration of the analogy adds a great deal of complexity to the picture:

Consider a tuned lyre, and a soprano singing an aria. The vibrations caused by the aria will resound in the chords of the lyre. This reverberation is a blend of the form of the aria and the form of the attuned chords of the lyre. Such a blend of forms, one encoded in the disturbance deriving from the perceptible, and the other of the sense organ, constitutes the experience by the perceiver of the perceptible. (115–16; see also 117)

The idea is, I take it, that both the incoming ‘disturbances’ of the medium and the perceptual organ contain forms. The medium contains the (encoded) form of the perceptual object, and the perceptual organ somehow contains the form of the perceptual faculty. When they come together, both forms blend in some way and constitute the perceptual experience in a way analogous to the way in which the blend of the form of the aria and the form of the attuned chords brings about a reverberation of the aria in the lyre. Unfortunately, this is all we are told. Such as it stands, the analogy raises more questions than it proposes to answer. Most significantly, we are not told how the metaphysical framework of the first part of

29 Scaltsas, ‘Biological’, 28–9. His analogy is designed to illustrate how Aristotle can maintain that perception is irreducible to physical properties without committing to the physical primitiveness of perceptual experience.
Marmodoro’s book maps onto the elements of the analogy. Presumably the analogy is designed to illustrate her metaphysical thesis that perception is literally constituted by the common activity of the mutual activations of the relevant co-ordinated partner powers. But how is this supposed to work in this case? Does the ‘blending interaction’ of the form of the aria and the form of the lyre illustrate the direct interaction of co-ordinated perceptual powers? How does that help us? All I can detect in the scenario is how the sounds of the aria reverberate in a resounding object (the lyre) that is tuned in a certain way. I can also see how such reverberation may partly constitute an acoustic experience, but only the audible part of it. But I fail to see how the reverberation of the sounds of the aria in the lyre illustrates a ‘blending interaction’ of the two forms. As it stands, Marmodoro’s elaboration of the analogy is opaque.

3. Perception of complex content

Up to this point Aristotle on Perceiving Objects has dealt with simple and modally specific perceptual content, colours, sounds, and so on. These are the external qualitative objects of perception that Aristotle calls ‘special sensibles’ (idia aisthēta). For the special sensibles Marmodoro, as we have seen, offers a straightforward application of her theory of causal powers, which is based upon the ‘one-to-one correspondence’ between the perceptual quality, the stimulus of the sense organs, and the content of perceptual experience. From now on, however, things become complicated. For now the task is to account for complex perceptual experience, where (as she emphasizes as well) there is no such one-to-one correspondence; on the contrary, it is owing to the one-to-one correspondence principle that there are physical constraints on the workings of the special senses that seem to make a unified perception of most forms of complex content impossible. Hence, in Marmodoro’s account, if we were endowed with our five special senses only, we would not perceive 3-D objects, but merely isolated bits and pieces of colours, sounds, and so on. Yet it seems obvious that complex perceptual content, such as, for instance, the perception of the sweetness and the whiteness of a sugar cube, is somehow unified content. What is needed, then,

30 Not to speak of the difficulty of seeing how Aristotle could have accepted the idea of a ‘blending interaction’ between forms.
is an account of the *perception* of the structured, and thus unified, complexity of perceptual objects that does not work on the one-to-one correspondence model.

Marmodoro’s first move in attacking the problem is to claim that Aristotle, in coping with that new situation, adopts a different methodology in the individuation of these higher perceptual functions. In the case of complex perceptual content, she says, Aristotle shifts from an external to an ‘intensional criterion’ (her term—a misprint?) of individuation: from now on, he individuates the relevant capacity by what it *is aware of* (210), i.e. by its content:

Aristotle used a *different individuation principle* for the common sense from the one he used previously for the special senses: not from the uniqueness of the object of sense (as in the case of the special senses), nor from the uniqueness of the sense organ (as the common sense does not have an organ), but *from the oneness of the complex perceptual content to the oneness of the perceiving sense*—in this case the common sense. (211, emphasis original)

This seems a rather drastic change in methodology. Now it is not the external objects, but the cognitive achievement belonging to the sense in question, that serves as the principle of its individuation. This cognitive achievement is the diverse forms of *unity* of complex perceptual content. Now, as is clear from the quotation as well, Marmodoro also thinks that there is but *one* sensory capacity responsible for *all* kinds of complex perceptual content that go beyond what the five special senses achieve. This is the common sense. She identifies five kinds of such complex perceptual content:

1. simultaneous perception of a plurality of properties within one sense modality;
2. perceptual discrimination of a plurality of properties within one modality;
3. awareness of modally complex content (‘cross-modal binding’);
4. perception of multimodal content common to more than one sense modality (Aristotle’s ‘common sensibles’);
5. perception of 3-D objects.

Let us start with (4), the (controversial) claim that the common sense (*aisthēsis koinē*) is in charge of the perception of the so-called ‘common sensibles’ (*koina aisthēta*). These are perceptible features
Common Sense and Extra Powers

shared by more than one sense modality. Aristotle mentions motion, rest, shape, extension, number, and unity (DA 2.6, 418a17–19; 3.1, 425b14 ff.; cf. De sensu 4, 442b5). With this Marmodoro does not want to deny that the special senses have perception of the common sensibles as well; she denies only that they have a full grasp of them. Very roughly, she argues as follows (168–78):

(i) The individual senses perceive their corresponding qualities.

(ii) The individual senses also perceive features of their corresponding qualities that occur in other sense modalities as well (the so-called common sensibles). Sight, for example, perceives not only colours, but also movement, rest, shape of colours, and so on. However, each individual sense can perceive the common sensibles only as they occur in their own sense modality.

(iii) To perceive the common sensibles in one sense modality is to have only a partial perception of the common sensibles (171 ff.).

(iv) Each of the common sensibles (besides occurring in different sense modalities) is also a single sensible on its own.

(v) Perception has a full grasp of the common sensibles.31

(vi) The common sense has a full perceptual grasp of the common sensibles.32

This is meant to establish that there is a special job for the common sense that none of the other senses can do, namely perceiving the common sensibles to their full extent (note here that (iii)–(vi) are without explicit textual support in Aristotle). What is this common sense? Marmodoro stresses that it is not an extra sense over and above the five special senses. Rather, it is the five senses ‘acting together as one, that is when acting as integrated parts of the perceptual system’ (162). But, for her, the common sense is more than just the co-operation of the five senses: it is endowed with extra powers on its own that enable it to carry out perceptual operations over and above the five senses. These extra powers, as we will see, all boil down to bestowing unity on the diverse inputs of the

31 ‘The answer for Aristotle is that no special sense can perceive movement, the single sensible that is common to a moving-color and a moving-tickle’ (171).

32 ‘[A] full grasp of the common sensibles is possible only in the context of all the perceptions of the common sensibles supplied by the special senses acting as one’ (171).
special senses. This unique function, Marmodoro argues, makes it necessary that the common sense be given a ‘metaphysically robust’ interpretation (as opposed to the more deflationary views that deny such extra powers to the common sense and make its unity and operations depend on other things, such as, for example, the body). To make her case, she discusses each of the different kinds of complex perceptual content (starting with types (1)–(4) above), plus the constraints Aristotle imposes on the workings of the perception of complex content (mainly in DA 3. 2, 7; De sensu 7; and De somno 2). On that basis, finally, we can see how she would answer our initial question, namely how we can hear the bell if the bell does not causally act on us as a bell (5). The answer, in a nutshell, is that we do indeed hear the bell, and that we do so directly, namely via the direct perception of the common sensibles by the common sense. The perception of 3-D objects, according to her account, then, is in a way like the full-fledged perception of common sensibles. Starting with the common sensibles mentioned by Aristotle explicitly, she writes: ‘the common sensibles are multimodal sensibles perceived directly by the common sense’ (179, emphasis original), and adds that the ‘perceiver perceives directly via the common sense the ball’s shape, as color and texture unified in a certain spatio-temporal location’ (180, emphasis original).

The idea is that the full-fledged perception of the common sensibles by the common sense renders a coherent multimodal picture of the common perceptual features of things (shape, unity, number, etc.). This is then applied to the perception of 3-D objects in, roughly, the following way:

(i) Common sensibles are ‘ways in which the special sensibles are clustered together’ (176–7).

(ii) The common sense has a direct and full-fledged perception of the common sensibles.

See Gregoric, Common Sense, 69–82, and T. Johansen, The Powers of Aristotle’s Soul (Oxford, 2012), 178–9, against both of whom Marmodoro argues at length (mostly on the basis of her metaphysical distinctions, 199 ff.). It is surprising that she does not engage with Modrak’s interpretation of the common sense. For, on the face of it, Modrak’s view has some similarity to her own: ‘The common sense is not a separate sense; it just is the capacity for the joint exercise of several senses. By this means Aristotle significantly expands the number of capacities of the perceptual system. Each special sense is limited to a narrow range of objects, but there are no similar limitations on the objects that can be apprehended through the common sense’ (D. K. W. Modrak, Aristotle: The Power of Perception [Power] (Chicago, 1987), 65).
(iii) 3-D objects are (in a way) unified clusters of properties (161).
(iv) 3-D objects are perceived directly by the common sense (178–81).

Now (iii) needs to be read with a grain of salt. For the common sense, she adds, does not perceive 3-D objects as mere clusters of properties, but as structured wholes. How? The answer lies in Marmodoro’s ‘metaphysically robust’ interpretation of the common sense.\(^{34}\) The common sense is the special senses qua one, but metaphysically speaking it is very different from them. Its ‘robust’ metaphysical status makes it, i.e. common sense, the source of the unity of the complex input provided by the special senses. To explain ‘the unification of their [i.e. the special senses’] complex content’, she writes:

we need to look further to the subsequent models of the common sense and its perceptual contents. (271)

He [viz. Aristotle] derives (metaphysically) the unity of its perceptual content from the unity of the common sense. (163)

This is a ‘metaphysically robust’ interpretation indeed. According to Marmodoro, the common sense is an active unifier of modally specific perceptual content. Its job is actively to bestow unity on the diverse input of the individual senses.\(^{35}\)

The finale of the book is a discussion of Aristotle’s metaphysically ‘robust’ account of the common sense (chapters 6 and 7). It asks what kind of complex metaphysical unity the common sense must have in order to be able to fulfil its function. The answer is given in the form of a developmental story of Aristotle’s thinking about the metaphysical unity of the common sense along six (!) incremental stages. Marmodoro takes these models from diverse passages in both the *De anima* and the *Parva Naturalia*. The model he finally ends up with, she argues, is a combination of the ‘substance model’ from *De sensu* 7, according to which the unity of the common sense parallels the complex unity of substances and their properties, and the ‘common power’ model of *De somno* 2, on which

\(^{34}\) This, by the way, also explains her previous methodological thesis that Aristotle individuates the common sense not by its external objects, but by its cognitive achievements.

\(^{35}\) It thereby also unifies the perceptual faculty as a whole: it is ‘a unifier of the whole perceptual faculty’ (255).
the common sense is conceptualized as an additional power over and above the special senses.

There is no room to discuss the details of this last larger section of the book, and in particular I will have to leave aside the sometimes intricate issues of textual interpretation. Regarding the proposed view, however, one question immediately springs to mind: if the common sense is a cognitive faculty that actively bestows its own metaphysical unity on the various inputs of the special senses, how is it still perception? In a way, Marmodoro’s distinction between the special senses and the common sense can be compared to the well-known Kantian distinction between sensibility and understanding (except that Kant thought the distinction justifies postulating two radically different mental faculties): there are five special senses, each of which produces the awareness of perceptual qualities via the one-to-one correspondence model of causal assimilation; but since awareness of qualities is all they produce, an additional and active synthetic capacity is required. Now, given that this view conceives of the special senses as receptive, and of the common sense as spontaneous (it actively bestows its unity on its content), one may ask how both can still count as parts of one and the same faculty. Why should we think of Marmodoro’s common sense as a perceptual power in the first place? In what sense can a faculty that actively bestows its own unity on the diverse input of the special senses still be described as receptive of perceptual forms? Or, approaching the matter from the other side, one may ask how the common sense is supposed to be different from the intellect: how is it that we hear the bell directly and via the direct perception of the common sensibles by the common sense, if the common sense is the source of the unity of that content? Perhaps Marmodoro has very good answers to both of these questions. However, she does not address them in her book. In any case, in meeting the above challenge of accounting for the perception of 3-D objects by the powers of perception alone, Marmodoro is prepared to go a long way in assimilating the common sense to the intellect.

Regarding the argument of this last section, the following ques-

36 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 33.
37 Aristotle describes the intellect as a unifying capacity at *DA* 3. 6, 430b5–6: τὸ δὲ ἐν ποιοὺς, τοῦτο ὁ νοῦς ἐκαστος. Marmodoro does not discuss the striking parallel of her interpretation of the common sense with Aristotle’s intellect.
38 Cf. Modrak, who writes about the common sense that it ‘enables a percipient to make various *apperceptual judgments*’ (*Power*, 65, emphasis added). It would have
Common Sense and Extra Powers

ations come to mind. First, such as it stands, the claim that Aristotle individuates the special senses by their external objects and the common sense by its content needs much more elaboration. In a famous methodological passage, Aristotle says that all the main faculties of the soul are to be defined by their corresponding activities, i.e. by what they do; but he adds that in order to define these activities, one ought to start with determining their corresponding objects (τὰ ἀντικείμενα, DA 2. 4, 415a14–22). This sounds as if all the main faculties of the soul, including perception (a17–22), are to be defined by what they do. Of course, there can be no doubt that, for example, Aristotle’s discussion of the ‘principle through which we say that the living being is capable of perceiving’ in DA 3. 239 differs in its methodology from the discussion of the special senses in DA 2. 7–12. But it is not plausible to suppose that this difference consists simply in an application of the distinction between ‘external object’ and ‘cognitive achievement’.

Second, does the claim that Aristotle shifts methodology in individuating the common sense amount to a suspension only of the one-to-one correspondence model of causal assimilation? Or does it mean that the causal assimilation model does not apply altogether? One might think the solution eventually adopted by Marmodoro (objects are perceived through the direct perception of common sensibles by the common sense) requires rejecting only the one-to-one correspondence model; but her claim that the common sense actively bestows its own unity on its content seems to suggest otherwise. Clarity in this matter, however, seems important, as the latter option would cut off the content of the common sense from the causal influence of what it is about. And it is all the more important as Marmodoro’s previous discussion of the veridicality of special sensibles entirely depends on the one-to-one causal assimilation model. Thus, a suspension of that model makes discussion of how the common sense can still veridically perceive complex content a pressing matter: how does the unity of complex perceptual content relate to the unity of the external 3-D objects? Is it by correspondence? It is disappointing that Aristotle on Perceiving Objects does not contain an explicit discussion of that central issue.

Aristotle, at any rate, does not seem to cut off the content of the

39 427a14–15.
perception of 3-D objects from the latter’s direct causal influence, as the following passage shows. The passage suggests further that he might have thought that the veridicality of 3-D-object perception is grounded in that direct causal linkage:

Some, indeed, raise a question also on these very points; they declare it impossible that one person should hear, or see, or smell, the same object as another, urging the impossibility of several persons in different places hearing or smelling the same object; for the one same thing would thus be divided from itself. The answer is that, in perceiving the object which first set up the motion—e.g. a bell, or frankincense, or fire—all perceive an object numerically one and the same; while, of course, in the special object perceived they perceive an object numerically different for each, though specifically the same for all; and this, accordingly, explains how it is that many persons together see, or smell, or hear the same object. These things are not bodies, but an affection or process of some kind (otherwise this would not have been, as it is, a fact of experience), though, on the other hand, they each imply a body. (De sensu 446b18–27)

Here, two statements are of interest for our present concern. First, when a plurality of perceivers are exposed to the same perceptual object, the special object of perception (the special sensible, the idion) will be numerically different, and only specifically (eidei) the same for each perceiver. This is well taken care of by Marmodoro’s ‘subtle’ realism. Second, all perceivers hear the numerically same 3-D object, which object is also the first mover of the whole process (τοῦ κινήσαντος πρῶτον; the examples are all primary substances: a bell, frankincense, a fire). Now, the interpretation of this is tricky. What seems clear is that Aristotle thinks perception is veridical with respect to 3-D objects (bodies, the bell, the frankincense, the fire), and that the 3-D objects are also the first moving causes of perception. This suggests that we perceive 3-D objects via affection by their perceptual properties, but that the causal origin of these affections is not the properties themselves but the 3-D objects whose properties they are. What seems less clear from the passage is whether Aristotle also thinks that perceptual qualities can be veridically perceived without 3-D objects. His statement that each of the affections implies a body (‘is not without body’: οὐδὲ ἄνευ σώματος, 446b26) can be taken in least two ways: either we say that the perceptible affection requires a 3-D object for its existence, or we say that each perceptible affection is already from the beginning a perceptible affection of a property of a 3-D object. Now the lat-
ter seems the more attractive option, not only because it fits better with the passage’s claim that the hearing of the sound of the bell is a hearing of the bell (because the sound originates in the bell, its first mover), but also because it does not require an account of the veridicality of the perception of 3-D objects which is radically different from that of the perception of special sensibles. It allows conceiving of perception as being immediately of 3-D objects, without taking a detour over the isolated perception of qualities (which then have to be put together by an additional synthetic perceptual power). On that reading the passage suggests that we perceive 3-D objects holistically even when we happen to engage causally with them via one sense modality only. Of course, one would have to show how this can work in the particular case, i.e. how exposure to the continuous causal influence of 3-D objects on our special senses can render their perception. Now this, even though it may prove challenging as well, seems an approach well worth pursuing. Aristotle on Perceiving Objects, however, does not consider it.

As for the argument that the common sense is in charge of perceiving the common sensibles to their full extent, it has not become clear to me how we can ‘fully’ perceive common sensibles as single sensibles (as claimed on page 171). Perhaps this is simply a lack of imagination on my part. I have difficulties in seeing how motion, rest, shape, extension, number, or unity can be perceived in ways that transcend the particular ways in which they occur in the different sense modalities.


It is interesting in this connection that Marmodoro rejects Charles’s proposal that the common sense is causally assimilated to the external 3-D object, on the ground that there is no (specific, I take it) sense organ that can be affected by the multimodal features of the object so as to become like them (178). But does ‘causal assimilation’ always have to work in this one-to-one correspondence way? Charles does not think so. He says that the ‘range’ of that model extends also to the perception of 3-D objects (‘cross model object’ in his parlance): ‘Consideration of the case of common sensibles shows the range of the causal-likening model. It need not be confined to the type of physiologically based account offered for special perception. Indeed, it can be applied even in cases where no physiological account of this type is offered. In the case of perception of common sensibles, several sense organs can together receive the relevant form of one moving object, when they discriminate one such object (in favoured cases) under the causal influence of one continuous moving object’ (D. Charles, Aristotle on Meaning and Essence (Oxford, 2000), 127–8). So, according to Charles, continuous exposure to the causal influence of the 3-D object can, via the perception of common sensibles (unity, shape, motion, and so on), generate assimilation to them.
Regarding the discussion of the metaphysical unity of the common sense, I will not go through the different stages of Aristotle’s alleged development here. But it seems to me that, pace Marmodoro’s ‘problem-oriented’ approach (214), Aristotle is unlikely to have gone over one and the same philosophical question as many as six times, or to have gone back and forth between different chapters within one or even between different treatises with the same question in mind. To treat Aristotle’s treatises in this way, I think, misses something very important, namely the systematic dimension of the order and sequence of his writings, and the subtle principles of division of explanatory labour by which they are governed. This holds to some degree for most of his writings, but the division of explanatory labour is especially conspicuous in the mutual cross-references in the *De anima* and the so-called *Parva Naturalia*.

4. Conclusion

The argument of *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* centres on three major theses:

1. Aristotle is a proponent of an ontology of pure causal powers.
2. His theory of modally specific perception is a straightforward application of this ontology. The result is a causal and ‘subtle’ direct realist theory.
3. The common sense is a perceptual faculty endowed with extra powers on its own. It is responsible for the perception of complex perceptual content, including the perception of 3-D objects. It actively bestows unity on the diverse input from the special senses.

With these claims (each of which would have easily justified a separate book), Marmodoro proposes a radically new picture of Aristotle’s metaphysics of powers and theory perception. However, her ideas, as we have seen, are not always fully worked out, and sometimes they are presented too hastily to be convincing. Furthermore, the overall argument would have greatly profited if Marmodoro had pointed out more clearly how her main theses are supposed to connect with each other. This applies especially to (3) above, where it did not become clear how the metaphysical framework in (1) is sup-
posed to map onto her account of the perception of what she calls complex perceptual content by the common sense: what exactly are the active and passive powers involved in the perception of 3-D objects? How can a perceptual faculty which, unlike the special senses, is individuated by its cognitive achievement fit into her scheme of mutually activating active and passive powers? Marmodoro does not tell us. This, as we have seen, leaves an important lacuna in her account, mainly because of the repercussions it has on the thesis in (2), that Aristotle has a causal and direct realist theory of perception. For the way in which Marmodoro establishes that thesis relies entirely on her co-ordinated causal powers view of perception. As a result, it is unclear how she wants to preserve the ‘subtle’ realist picture of perception in the all-important case of the perception of 3-D objects.

As for the argument for (1), the thesis that Aristotle is a proponent of an ontology of pure causal powers, it seems to me that, such as it stands, and as an interpretation of Aristotle’s texts, it is ill-conceived. In spite of the impressive amount of ingenuity invested by Marmodoro, readers who are familiar with Aristotle’s metaphysics are not likely to be convinced of her claim that he thought of powers as subjects of change (even if it is a ‘transition’). Marmodoro’s application of this metaphysical framework to modally specific perception in (2), by contrast, should have appeal for the scholar of Aristotle. Her ‘subtle’ perceptual realism maximally teases out the explanatory potential of Aristotle’s basic account of change. As for (3), I cannot evaluate here the philosophical merit of the proposal that the common sense is a ‘metaphysically robust’ capacity of perceptual synthesis, especially since Marmodoro herself does not pause to consider its philosophical implications. But there can be no doubt that her proposal strongly assimilates the common sense to the synthetic powers of the Aristotelian intellect. Whatever we may think of it as a thesis, though, Marmodoro’s at times remarkably ingenious discussions will nourish further discussion in the field. One does not have to agree with all, or even any, of the main theses of Aristotle on Perceiving Objects to profit from reading it. I think the book will have a positive effect on the discussion of Aristotle’s theory of perception, in spite of the methodological and interpretative reservations I have expressed here. It inspires readers to think harder about the actual workings of perception in Aristotle and its philosophical underpinnings. This is always a good
thing, and especially in the context of Aristotle’s theory of perception, where the trend of the past few decades was to focus on questions which drew attention away from the explanatory powers of Aristotle’s metaphysics of ordinary change. I thus welcome Aristotle on Perceiving Objects and recommend it to anyone who wishes to engage seriously with Aristotle’s philosophy of perception.

University of California, Berkeley

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Herzberg, S., Wahrnehmung und Wissen bei Aristoteles: Zur epistemologischen Funktion der Wahrnehmung (Berlin, 2011).


INDEX LOCORUM

Aeschylus
Eumenides
662 ff.: 71 n. 7
Persae
547: 5

Aëtius
Placita
4. 8. 1: 173, 173 n. 72
4. 8. 12: 173
4. 9. 4: 173
4. 12. 1–5: 168–9 n. 62
4. 12. 1: 238 n. 2

Alexander of Aphrodisias
De anima, ed. Bruns
3. 13, 107. 6–12: 239 n. 5
5. 4–14: 232
7. 9–14: 231
10. 24–6: 232
24. 21–4: 232
25. 2–3: 232
26. 20–2: 232
67. 15–23: 267 n. 73
73. 7–13: 259–60 n. 58
78. 24–5: 230 n. 49
78. 26–79. 3: 230–1
98. 1–7: 226
De fato, ed. Bruns
6, 171. 11–17: 259–60 n. 58
12, 180. 26–8: 259–60 n. 58
183. 21–184. 5 Bruns: 239 n. 5
14, 183. 30–184. 16: 259–60 n. 58
29, 199. 27–200. 7: 259–60 n. 58
In Aristotelis Analyticorum priorum
librum primum commentarium, ed. Wallies
126. 9–17: 224 n. 41
260. 18–261. 19: 223 n. 39
In Aristotelis librum De sensu commentarium, ed. Wendland
73. 18–21: 231
In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria, ed. Hayduck
349. 33–6: 233
394. 4–6: 231

426. 11–13: 227
In Aristotelis Meteorologiorum libris
commentaria, ed. Hayduck
226. 19–23: 233 n. 55
In Aristotelis Physica commentarium
schol. 597, p. 531 Rashed: 233 n. 54
315. 13–15: 233 n. 54
1246. 16–25: 229
1246. 25–6: 229
1246. 27–30: 229
1246. 30–1247. 2: 225, 226
1246. 30–3: 224
De mixtione, ed. Bruns
216. 14–218. 6: 171
218. 2–10: 167 n. 57
Mantissa, ed. Bruns
150. 20 ff.: 151 n. 18
150. 25: 149–50 n. 13
150. 27–8: 158–9 n. 35
150. 30–3: 160, 160 n. 39
162. 29: 149–50 n. 13
23, 172. 25–30: 259–60 n. 58
Quaestiones, ed. Bruns
2. 9: 232 n. 51
3. 13, 107. 5–19: 259–60 n. 58
119. 23: 149–50 n. 13, 157 n. 31
Refutation of Galen
Carullah
66b23–67a1: 229
67a13–17: 226
67a18–20: 230
67a19–20: 232
67a30–1: 205
67a34–5: 220
67b6: 226
67b20: 221
67b22–3: 220
67b26–7: 226
66b31–2: 206
Escorial
60a20–19: 220
60a20: 220
61a3–9: 226
61a23: 220
62a13–19: 205
to the text
De partibus animalium 639a15–b5: 290 n. 3
642a13–20: 108 n. 14
642b26–8: 108 n. 14
644b25–b15: 290 n. 3

De sensu
440b18–25: 303 n. 22
442b5: 311
445b20 ff.: 303 n. 22
446b18–27: 316
446b26: 316

Eudemian Ethics
122b35–6: 103–4 n. 7

Metaphysics
984b16–19: 108
984b8–11: 108
986b27–987b2: 12
986b31–987b2: 22
987b8: 103–4 n. 7
991b16: 3 n. 8
1011b25–8: 132
1017a22–3: 123, 127
1017a27–30: 128 n. 36
1017a31–5: 112
1017a32–3: 103
1017a33–5: 103, 128 n. 36
1017a35–b2: 127
1017a35–b1: 127
1023b33–4: 227
1024a1–6: 227
1024b17–1025a1: 107
1024b17–27: 106–7
1024b17–26: 107, 108
1024b17–19: 106
1024b18: 108
1024b19–21: 107
1024b20–1: 107
1024b20: 108
1024b21: 139
1024b24–5: 107
1024b25: 108, 139
1024b26–1025a1: 107
1024b26–8: 111
1024b26–7: 139
1024b28: 108
1024b36: 108
1027b17–1028a4: 120–1
1027b17–23: 103–4
1027b17–19: 104
1027b18–23: 109
1027b18: 103 n. 6
1027b19–20: 120 n. 25
1027b19: 103–4 n. 7, 105, 120 n. 25, 121, 134
1027b20–3: 104 n. 8, 120 n. 25
1027b20–2: 121
1027b20: 104
1027b23–5: 104 n. 8, 120 n. 25
1027b25–7: 121
1027b25: 120–1 n. 26, 122
1027b26: 139
1027b27–8: 139
1027b28–31: 122
1027b29–34: 104
1027b29–31: 121–2
1027b29–30: 105
1027b29: 122
1027b30: 139
1027b31–2: 122, 127, 128 n. 36
1027b31: 122, 139
1027b32–3: 122
1027b33: 139
1027b34–1028a1: 122
1028b1–3: 105
1028b1–2: 123, 124 n. 30
1028b1: 139
1028b2–4: 124
1028b2: 123
1028b3–4: 124 n. 30
1045b35–1046b4: 293–4
1045b36: 293
1046b1–2: 293 n. 5
1046b10–11: 293
1048b25 ff.: 293 n. 5
1048b8–10: 294 n. 8
1051a34–b9: 120, 125–6, 133
1051a34–5: 127
1051a35–b1: 127
1051a1–3: 126
1051a1–2: 127, 128, 129, 129 n. 37, 135, 138
1051a1: 134, 135
1051b2–3: 130, 131, 133, 136
1051b2: 126 n. 33, 129, 129 n. 37, 130, 135, 136, 139
1051b3–5: 112, 130, 131
1051b3–4: 131, 132
1051b3: 131, 139
1051b4: 139
1051b5–6: 131, 138
1051b5: 139
1051b6–9: 113 n. 16, 114, 131, 132, 133, 138
1051b7–9: 112
Index Locorum

Posterior Analytics
73\textsuperscript{b}25–74\textsuperscript{a}3: 290 n. 3
74\textsuperscript{a}32–\textsuperscript{b}4: 290 n. 3
88\textsuperscript{b}32–3: 112 n. 15
89\textsuperscript{a}2–3: 112 n. 15

Prior Analytics
48\textsuperscript{a}24: 103–4 n. 7
65\textsuperscript{b}6: 103–4 n. 7

Rhetoric
1364\textsuperscript{b}7–10: 112 n. 15

Sophistici elenchi
165\textsuperscript{b}30 ff.: 207 n. 12

Topics
146\textsuperscript{a}21 ff.: 44 n. 27

Arius Didymus, ed. Diels
fr. phys. 39: 161 n. 40

Athenaeus
89 c–d: 161 n. 42

Calcidius
In Platonis Timaeum commentarium,
ed. Waszink
156: 260, 261 n. 59

Cicero

Academica
1. 22–3: 151 n. 18
1. 40: 239
1. 41–2: 247–8 n. 31
1. 41: 246 n. 28
2. 31: 188–9 n. 103
2. 91: 253–4 n. 47
2. 131: 143 n. 2, 187–8 n. 101, 189

De fato
30: 187–8 n. 101
43: 243

De finibus
1. 29–31: 158
2. 31–2: 158
2. 33–4: 188 n. 102
2. 33: 163
3. 16–23: 151, 151 n. 18
3. 16–22: 143 n. 2
3. 16: 160 n. 39, 164
3. 17–18: 188–9 n. 103
3. 17: 181–2 n. 92
3. 18: 194
3. 21: 153, 182, 188–9 n. 103
3. 23: 182
3. 24–5: 253–4 n. 47
3. 24: 179 n. 84
Index Locorum

3. 59: 157 n. 31
3. 63–4: 186
3. 63: 161 n. 42
3. 65: 177 n. 81
3. 66: 166 n. 54
4. 15–16: 181–2 n. 92
4. 15: 187–8 n. 101, 189 n. 106
4. 16 ff.: 151 n. 18
4. 16–19: 146
4. 16: 163
4. 19: 181–2 n. 92
4. 25–39: 146
4. 25: 181–2 n. 92
4. 26–7: 183
4. 28: 180
4. 32–4: 181–2 n. 92
4. 33–9: 147
4. 41: 182 n. 94
4. 60: 189 n. 106
5. 16–21: 151 n. 18
5. 17: 181–2 n. 92
5. 18: 189 n. 105
5. 20: 187–8 n. 101, 189 n. 106
5. 23–4: 181–2 n. 92
5. 24–7: 151 n. 18
5. 24–36: 146
5. 24: 163, 189, 189 n. 104
5. 55: 181–2 n. 92
De legibus
1. 27: 186
1. 28: 193

De natura deorum
2. 18: 195
2. 35: 190
2. 120–53: 163–4 n. 47
2. 123–4: 161 n. 42, 166 n. 54, 178 n. 81
3. 27: 195
3. 33: 163

De officiis
1. 11–14: 151 n. 18
1. 12: 186
1. 53–8: 151 n. 18
1. 132: 167 n. 56
3. 27: 151 n. 18

Tusculan Disputations
4. 10–11: 187–8 n. 101
4. 13: 30: 179 n. 84
4. 31: 176 n. 77
5. 37–8: 190
5. 38–9: 162 n. 43
5. 38: 184 n. 97, 194 n. 114
5. 39: 170 n. 65
5. 84–5: 187–8 n. 101, 189 n. 106

Clement of Alexandria
Stromateis
2. 12. 54–5: 239
2. 20. 110. 4–11. 2: 167 n. 56

Diogenes Laertius
7. 1–2: 195
7. 45: 248
7. 46: 247
7. 49: 168–9 n. 62, 177 n. 79
7. 51: 238 n. 3, 238 n. 4, 243 n. 22
7. 52: 173 n. 70
7. 54: 173 n. 70
7. 63: 177 n. 79
7. 75: 243
7. 85–6: 143 n. 2, 151 n. 18, 153–4
7. 85: 151 n. 17, 180 n. 90, 189 n. 105
7. 86: 153, 184 n. 97
7. 88: 180
7. 89: 162–3 n. 45
7. 94: 147 n. 8
7. 100: 179 n. 84
7. 108: 150 n. 14, 150 n. 16, 176 n. 78,
179 n. 82, 190 n. 107
7. 138–9: 167
7. 151: 171
7. 159: 161 n. 40
10. 137: 158

Epictetus
Dissertationes
1. 1. 1: 252 n. 41
1. 1. 4–5: 252
1. 1. 4: 179 n. 83
1. 1. 7: 251 n. 38
1. 2. 30–2: 179 n. 83
1. 2. 30–1: 166 n. 53
1. 6. 7: 179 n. 82
1. 6. 16–21: 151 n. 18
1. 6. 16–17: 180
1. 6. 18–22: 185–6 n. 99
1. 6. 18: 179 n. 82
1. 6. 37: 179 n. 83
1. 10. 10: 195
1. 11. 27–37: 251 n. 39
1. 14. 6–7: 191
1. 15. 4: 180 n. 86
1. 17. 22–3: 251
1. 17. 1–4: 254
1. 18. 1: 240 n. 10
Index Locorum

1. 19. 11–15: 155 n. 24, 157 n. 31
1. 19. 15: 151 n. 18
1. 20: 252
1. 20. 1–6: 179 n. 83
1. 20. 5: 253
1. 26. 15: 179
1. 28. 2–3: 240 n. 10
1. 28. 3: 240
1. 28. 4: 240
2. 2. 1–4: 180 n. 88
2. 2. 1: 180 n. 86
2. 2. 20: 180 n. 86
2. 4. 1–4: 157 n. 31, 180 n. 88
2. 8. 185–6 n. 99
2. 8. 19–20: 179 n. 82
2. 8. 21–3: 180 n. 86
2. 10. 4: 179 n. 82
2. 10. 10–18: 157 n. 31, 180 n. 88
2. 16. 15: 2–4: 258
2. 16. 28: 180 n. 86
2. 22. 15–21: 157 n. 31, 180 n. 88
2. 22. 15: 151 n. 18
2. 23. 17–19: 157 n. 31, 180 n. 88
3. 24. 60–70: 251 n. 38
3. 4. 9: 180 n. 86
3. 6. 3–4: 180 n. 88
3. 6. 3: 180 n. 86
3. 6. 10: 179 n. 82
3. 7. 36: 180 n. 88
3. 10. 16: 180 n. 86, 180 n. 88
3. 24. 11: 151 n. 18
3. 24. 63–4: 179 n. 82
3. 24. 67–9: 190 n. 107
4. 1. 72–3: 251 n. 38
4. 4. 3: 3–4: 257
4. 5. 6: 180 n. 86, 180 n. 88

Encheiridion
1. 1–2: 251 n. 38
4: 180 n. 86, 180 n. 88
10. 1. 1–3: 257
31. 3: 151 n. 18

Euclid
Elements
10, prop. 117: 223 n. 39

Eudemus, ed. Wehrli
fr. 45: 14 n. 45

Galen
De anatomicis administrationibus
5. 6, ii. 511 K.: 206 n. 12
6. 4, ii. 550 K.: 206 n. 12

De causis contentivis, ed. Kollesch–Nickel–Strohmaier
7, 138. 6–9: 214
8, 138. 16–31: 214
8, 139. 4–6: 214 n. 27

De causis pulsuum
1. 1, ix. 1: 1–2: 4 K.: 216
1. 1, ix. 1–2 K.: 214
1. 1, ix. 1 K.: 214 n. 27
1. 1, ix. 2–3 K.: 217
1. 1, ix. 3: 9–15 K.: 217
1. 2, ix. 4: 10–5: 7 K.: 213
3. 14, ix. 145 K.: 218 n. 32
4. 2, viii. 714. 13–18 K.: 217

De constitutione artis medicæ, ed. Fortuna
3, 62. 17–27 (= i. 234–5 K.): 212

De elementis ex Hippocrate, ed. De Lacy
6, 110. 17–21 (= i. 465–6 K.): 206 n. 12
6, 112. 16–18 (= i. 468 K.): 206 n. 12
8, 126. 1–5 (= i. 479 K.): 206 n. 12
9, 126. 19–21 (= i. 481 K.): 212

De locis affectis
1. 2, viii. 26 K.: 209 n. 18
1. 3, viii. 32 K.: 206 n. 13
1. 7, viii. 66 K.: 214–15
2. 5, viii. 126–8 K.: 214 n. 25

De methodo medendi
1. 6, x. 45 K.: 206 n. 13
2. 3, x. 87 K.: 206 n. 13, 214
2. 3, x. 89 K.: 212 n. 21
2. 6, x. 116 K.: 212
2. 6, x. 118 K.: 212, 212 n. 22, 215
5. 2, x. 309 K.: 206 n. 12
7. 2, x. 459–60 K.: 212

De morborum differentiis
4, vi. 846 K.: 212

De motibus dubii, ed. Nutton–Bos
1. 10–13, 124. 14–126. 2: 210 n. 19

De partium homoeomerum differentiis, ed. Strohmaier
1. 8, iv. 403–4 K.: 214 n. 28

De naturalibus facultatibus, ed. Helmreich
1. 2, 105. 15 (= ii. 7 K.): 212
1. 4, 107. 8–10 (= ii. 9 K.): 213 n. 24
1. 6, 110. 5–13 (= ii. 12 K.): 206 n. 12
1. 6, 110. 24–6 (= ii. 14 K.): 212 n. 22
2. 9, 192. 24–5 (= ii. 126 K.): 213 n. 23

De partium homoeomerum differentiis, ed. Strohmaier
1. 50. 14: 209
2, 54. 7: 212 n. 22
De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis, ed. De Lacy
4. 6. 2–3: 176 n. 77
5. 2. 25–8: 176 n. 77
5. 3. 1: 170 n. 65
5. 3. 160. p. 421 M.: 253 n. 45
5. 5. 3–7: 192 n. 110
5. 5. 8–26: 149, 149–50 n. 13, 160, 190
5. 5. 8–20: 190 n. 107
5. 5. 9–20: 162–3 n. 45
6. 1, 362. 8–9 (=v. 507 K.): 212 n. 21
6. 1, 362. 12–14 (=v. 508 K.): 216
7. 5, 454. 21–3 (=v. 620 K.): 210 n. 19
8. 4, 500. 3–19 (=v. 673 K.): 206 n. 12
De propriis placitis, ed. Nutton
10. 1–2, 88. 6–15: 215 n. 30
14. 1, 110. 15–21: 213 n. 24
De sanitate tuenda, ed. Koch
1. 5, 9. 4–6 (=vi. 15 K.): 212
9. 4–6 (=vi. 15 K.): 213 n. 23
De simplicium medicamentorum facultatibis
3. 16, xi. 584 K.: 209 n. 18
De symptomatum differentiis
1, vii. 44 K.: 217
De temperamentis
3. 6, i. 603 K.: 213 n. 24
De usu partium, ed. Helmreich
4. 2, i. 196. 14–23 (=iii. 268. 10–17 K.): 214
17. 1, ii. 437 (=iii. 346–7 K.): 206 n. 13
Quod animi mores corporis temperamentum sequantur, ed. Mueller
3. 3. 37. 9–12 (=iv. 774 K.): 206 n. 12
Gellius
7. 2. 7: 242 n. 16
12. 5. 7: 151 n. 18
19. 1. 15–16: 250 n. 36
Gorgias, 82 DK
B 23: 21 n. 67
The Hellenistic Philosophers, ed. Long and Sedley
21A: 158
29F: 160, 171
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Line reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75A</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>n. 105</td>
<td>Heraclitus, 22 DK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 28: 5 n. 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 34: 21 n. 68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierocles</td>
<td>Elements of Ethics</td>
<td>col. 1. 1–37: 166</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 1. 1–2: 143 n. 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 1. 15–34: 167</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 1. 31–3: 166, 167 n. 56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 1. 33–7: 166</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 1. 34–7: 181–2 n. 92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cols. 1. 50–111. 29: 152</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. 5–9: 166 n. 53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. 35–46: 172 n. 68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. 19–29: 178 n. 81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. 20–9: 152 n. 19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. 23: 166 n. 54, 172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cols. 11. 54–v. 31: 172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cols. 11. 57–iv. 53: 172 n. 67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. 1–10: 164</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. 22–51: 171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. 51: 154 n. 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cols. 11. vii–viii: 152 n. 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. vii. 15–16: 149–50 n. 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. viii. 16: 154 n. 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. viii. 20: 154 n. 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. viii. 40–61: 171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>col. 11. viii. 49: 154 n. 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hippias, 86 DK</td>
<td>B 21: 36–7 n. 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer</td>
<td>Odyssey</td>
<td>23. 73: 8 n. 27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23. 383: 8 n. 27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>Oration</td>
<td>6. 6, 185 b–186 a: 179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus Aurelius</td>
<td>Meditations</td>
<td>2. 1: 193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. 17: 180 n. 87, 180 n. 88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. 6: 180 n. 87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. 12: 180 n. 87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. 16: 179 n. 82, 193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. 30: 193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. 16: 179 n. 82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. 30: 180 n. 87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. 40: 179 n. 82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. 44: 179 n. 82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. 13: 179 n. 82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. 17: 180 n. 87, 180 n. 88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. 20: 179 n. 82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. 55: 179 n. 82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8. 12: 179 n. 82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8. 41: 184 n. 97, 191</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8. 45: 179 n. 82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9. 9: 178 n. 81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9. 41: 180 n. 87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. 1. 1: 252 n. 42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. 1: 179 n. 83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. 5: 179 n. 83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. 13: 190 n. 107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. 16: 157 n. 31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. 18: 166 n. 53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. 20: 167 n. 57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. 21: 193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nemesius Emesenus</td>
<td>De natura hominis</td>
<td>35. 258: 191</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origen</td>
<td>De principiis</td>
<td>3. 1. 2–3: 167 n. 56, 192 n. 111</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. 1. 3: 246</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papyri</td>
<td>PHerc. 1020, col. iv, col. 1: 247</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parmenides, 28 DK</td>
<td>A 37: 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A 44: 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A 46: 23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 1: 1, 7, 9, 24, 27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 1. 28–32: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 1. 32: 17 n. 55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 2: 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 3: 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 4: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 6. 8–9: 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 6: 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 6. 4–9: 21 n. 69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 7. 2–6: 21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 7. 3–6: 4–5 n. 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 7. 5: 14, 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 8: 7, 8, 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 8. 1–2: 11 n. 36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B 8. 2–3: 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B 8. 3: 8
B 8. 4: 8, 8 n. 28
B 8. 5: 8
B 8. 6-21: 8
B 8. 9-10: 14 n. 48
B 8. 22-5: 8
B 8. 24: 7 n. 24, 13, 13 n. 43
B 8. 26: 8
B 8. 30: 8, 14
B 8. 34-6: 17
B 8. 36: 8
B 8. 37: 14
B 8. 38: 8, 8
B 8. 42-4: 9
B 8. 42-3: 7 n. 24
B 8. 45: 8
B 8. 49: 7 n. 24, 9
B 8. 50: 2
B 8. 51-6: 12
B 8. 52: 4, 20 n. 63
B 8. 53-9: 11
B 8. 55: 12
B 8. 56: 15
B 8. 59: 12
B 8. 60-1: 6, 16-17
B 8. 61: 3
B 9: 13
B 10: 14, 17, 24 n. 78
B 10. 1: 17 n. 56
B 10. 4: 17 n. 56
B 10. 5: 17 n. 56
B 12. 3-4: 24
B 13: 24
B 16: 23
B 19: 6, 11

**Philo**

*Legum allegoriae*
1. 30: 167 n. 56
2. 22-3: 167 n. 56

**Philoponus**

*In Aristotelis De anima libros commentaria*, ed. Hayduck
465. 32 ff.: 264 n. 69
466. 5-19: 264 n. 69
466. 20-2: 264 n. 69
488. 36-489. 6: 244-5 n. 25
497. 1-14: 267 n. 73
497. 2-14: 244-5 n. 25
500. 25-33: 244-5 n. 25

**Photius**

*Bibliotheca*
278, 529b11-23: 149 n. 12

**Plato**

*Apology*
21 C-D: 55
22 D 5-E 1: 62
29 A-B: 55
*Charmides*
165 c-169 C: 253-4 n. 47
*Critias*
107 c 6-d 2: 19-20, 20 n. 62
*Crito*
48 B 4-10: 145 n. 5
[Definitions]
416 A 10-11: 33 n. 5
*Euthydemus*
291 d-293 A: 253-4 n. 47
*Gorgias*
491 A: 39 n. 21
502 d-503 D: 56
503 A-B: 45
507 E 6-508 A 3: 16 n. 53
513 E-514 A: 56
525 B-C: 56
*Hippias Major*
281 A-D: 35
281 A-B: 35, 58 n. 49
281 B: 36
281 C-D: 35
282 B-383 B: 36
282 B 1: 39
282 D-E: 36
283 C-284 A: 35
283 C: 35
283 E-284 A: 45
284 A-C: 36
284 A 2-3: 35
284 C-D: 45
284 C: 36
285 B: 36
285 C 3-4: 35, 57
285 D-E: 35
285 D-286 A: 35
286 A-C: 35, 36
286 A 1-2: 44
286 A 3-4: 42
286 A 5-6: 39, 42
286 B 1: 42
286 B 3-4: 42
286 B 4-7: 62 n. 60
286 C-E: 50
Index Locorum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>286 E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>286 E 2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>286 E 5–287 A 1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>286 E 5–6</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>286 E 8–287 A 1</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>287 B</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>287 B 4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>287 E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>287 E 4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288 A–B</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288 A 3–5</td>
<td>51, 52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288 B</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288 B 1–3</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288 D</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288 D 4–5</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289 C</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289 D–E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289 D</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289 E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289 E 3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289 E 9–290 A 2</td>
<td>52 n. 36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290 A</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290 D 5–6</td>
<td>40 n. 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290 D 5</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290 E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 A</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 A 6–7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 D–E</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 D</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 D 3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 D 10–E 2</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 D 10</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 E–292 A</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 E 6–7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291 E 8–292 A 1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292 A–B</td>
<td>36, 58 n. 49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292 C 3–5</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>293 C</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>293 E 4–5</td>
<td>40 n. 22, 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>293 E 7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>293 E 11–294 A 2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 A 3–5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 A 7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 B 1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 B 2–5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 B 6–7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 C 3–4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 C 5–6</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 C 8–D 3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 D 7–E 4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294 E</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295 A</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>296 A–D</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>296 B 6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>296 C 3</td>
<td>4: 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>296 C 3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>296 C 7</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>296 D 4</td>
<td>50, 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>297 D</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>297 E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>297 E 1–2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>297 E 5–7</td>
<td>38, 44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>298 A 1–5</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>298 A 9–B 1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>298 B 2–3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>298 B 11</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>298 D 1–3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>299 A–B</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 C</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 C 4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 D</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 B–C</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 C</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 D</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301 D 2–3</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 A–B</td>
<td>35, 39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 A</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 A 5–6</td>
<td>39 n. 21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 A 6–B</td>
<td>3: 36, 46, 52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 B 4</td>
<td>39 n. 21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 B 5–6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 B 7–9</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 C–E</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304 D–E</td>
<td>47, 62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hippias Minor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>364 A 8–9</td>
<td>35–6 n. 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>368 B–E</td>
<td>62 n. 61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>368 B 2–32</td>
<td>35–6 n. 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>368 C 3–7</td>
<td>39 n. 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>653 A–D</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menexenus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>237 B</td>
<td>81 n. 28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238 C–D</td>
<td>86 n. 39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phaedo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 D 4–6</td>
<td>42 n. 24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philebus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 E–49</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protagoras</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>318 E</td>
<td>35 n. 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>347 C–348 B</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>337 A 4</td>
<td>50, 58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>374 E–376 E</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>376 C</td>
<td>412 A</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>376 C</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos</td>
<td>Sextus Empiricus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1078 E: 171</td>
<td><em>Adversus mathematicos</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1084 F: 253 n. 46</td>
<td>7. 12: 190 n. 107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>[De placitis philosophorum]</em></td>
<td>7. 151–2: 240 n. 28, 247–8 n. 31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900 D: 238 n. 2</td>
<td>7. 151: 240 n. 28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De sollartria animalium</td>
<td>7. 152: 246 n. 28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>962 A: 143 n. 2</td>
<td>7. 234: 167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>980 A: 161 n. 42</td>
<td>7. 235–6: 188–9 n. 103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>De Stoicorum repugnantissi</em></td>
<td>7. 236–7: 161 n. 40, 177 n. 79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1038 A–E: 151 n. 18</td>
<td>7. 236: 168–9 n. 62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1038 B–C: 152 n. 19</td>
<td>7. 237: 238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1038 B: 143 n. 2, 149, 149–50 n. 13,</td>
<td>7. 242–6: 238 n. 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190 n. 107</td>
<td>7. 255–6: 241 n. 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1052 A–1053 A: 167, 190 n. 107</td>
<td>7. 257: 240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Porphyry</em></td>
<td>7. 258–9: 238 n. 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>De abstinentia</em></td>
<td>7. 424: 173 n. 72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 19: 143 n. 2, 150 n. 15</td>
<td>8. 397: 230–40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Posidonius</em></td>
<td>9. 102: 161 n. 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190 n. 107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Proclus</em></td>
<td><em>Simplicius</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Elements of Theology</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31: 258</td>
<td><em>In Aristotelis De caelo commentaria</em>, ed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42–4: 258 n. 55</td>
<td>Heiberg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44: 258</td>
<td>323. 2–3: 222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191: 258</td>
<td>323. 3 13–15: 222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180–90: 259 n. 56</td>
<td>Diels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>276–80: 260</td>
<td>315. 13–15: 233 n. 54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In Platonis Timaeum commentaria</em>, ed.</td>
<td>1039. 13–15: 204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diehl</td>
<td>1039. 15–19: 221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. 345: 12–24: 1–2 n. 2, 2 n. 3</td>
<td>1040. 9–12: 205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In primaus Euclidis Elementorum librum</em></td>
<td>1041. 8–10: 220 n. 36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>commentarii</em>, ed. Friedlein</td>
<td>1246. 16–25: 229</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206: 12–26: 220 n. 35</td>
<td>1246. 25–6: 229</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1246. 27–30: 229</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1246. 30–1247. 2: 225, 228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1246. 30–3: 224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1247. 2–10: 220 n. 35, 224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>In Epictetum commentarius</em>, ed. Dübner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Seneca</em></td>
<td>13. 49–14. 9: 261, 261 n. 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Epistles</em></td>
<td>14. 7–9: 261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113. 23: 177 n. 80</td>
<td><em>[In libros Aristotelis De anima paraphrasis]</em>, ed. Hayduck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. 5: 160 n. 39</td>
<td>1. 18–20: 257 n. 53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. 7–8: 192</td>
<td>7. 22–5: 261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. 8: 172, 192, 192–3 n. 112</td>
<td>36. 3: 261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. 9: 164</td>
<td>41. 26–9: 263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. 10: 160, 171</td>
<td>80. 12–17: 263 n. 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. 14–17: 171</td>
<td>90. 15 ff.: 267 n. 74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. 17: 157 n. 31</td>
<td>90. 15–18: 267</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. 19: 161 n. 42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121. 21–4: 192 n. 111</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index Locorum

90. 15–16: 263 n. 67, 265
90. 16–18: 264
90. 17–18: 267
90. 17: 267 n. 72
118–19: 266 n. 71
118. 20 ff.: 266 n. 71
119. 14–16: 266 n. 71
119. 20–1: 266 n. 71
172. 4–5: 264 n. 69
173. 3–7: 259, 264
173. 3–4: 263 n. 68
187. 27–36: 263 n. 64, 264
187. 28–9: 263 n. 68
187. 37: 263
188. 1–2: 266
188. 2: 266 n. 71
188. 16–23: 265 n. 70
188. 18: 265–6 n. 70
189. 22–8: 265
202. 4–6: 266 n. 71
204. 34–5: 269
204. 35–205. 1: 264, 269
205. 7–10: 270, 275 n. 89
206. 5–6: 281 n. 96
206. 5: 281
206. 14–16: 268 n. 77
206. 14: 268 n. 77
206. 30 ff.: 267 n. 74
206. 30–5: 279
206. 30–1: 281 n. 96
206. 31–5: 280
206. 31–2: 268 n. 76, 281
206. 32–5: 282
206. 32: 282
206. 34–5: 271 n. 84
207. 18–22: 268 n. 76, 281
210. 10–211. 15: 282 n. 99
210. 11–14: 282 n. 99
210. 12–13: 268 n. 76
210. 14 ff.: 267 n. 74
210. 14: 267
210. 17–20: 272–3 n. 85
210. 20 ff.: 267 n. 74
237. 8–9: 262 n. 63
237. 9–11: 268, 270
237. 11: 273, 275
274. 22–4: 263 n. 67
274. 23–4: 273
279. 20: 259
290. 1–15: 263 n. 66
290. 1: 263 n. 65
290. 4–15: 261 n. 62
290. 4–6: 264
290. 9–10: 261
306. 18–20: 263 n. 65
308. 15 ff.: 244–5 n. 25
309. 34–6: 279

Sophocles
Oedipus tyrannus
412–19: 21 n. 68

Stobaeus
2. 47–8: 151 n. 18
2. 57: 147 n. 8
2. 62–3: 179 n. 84
2. 69: 190 n. 107
2. 82. 31: 173 n. 70
2. 85: 176 n. 78
2. 85. 13: 194 n. 114
2. 111. 10–112. 2: 246 n. 28
2. 117–28: 146 n. 7
2. 118–23: 151 n. 18
2. 118: 163
4. 502: 180–1, 194 n. 114

Stoicorum veterum fragmenta, ed.
von Arnim
i. 1: 195
i. 58: 168–9 n. 62
i. 60: 240 n. 28, 247–8 n. 31
i. 61: 239
i. 131: 143 n. 2
i. 197: 143 n. 2, 150 n. 15
i. 230: 190 n. 107
i. 356: 190 n. 107
ii. 52: 168–9 n. 62, 177 n. 79
ii. 54: 168–9 n. 62, 238 n. 2
ii. 61: 238 n. 3, 238 n. 4, 243 n. 22
ii. 65: 238 n. 3
ii. 68: 173 n. 72
ii. 71: 173 n. 70
ii. 72: 153
ii. 78: 153
ii. 91: 239–40
ii. 105: 173 n. 70
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ii.</th>
<th>iii.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>130: 247</td>
<td>228: 162–3 n. 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131: 247</td>
<td>342: 166 n. 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>458: 167 n. 56</td>
<td>343: 193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>473: 171</td>
<td>369: 161 n. 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>479: 171</td>
<td>471: 176 n. 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>480: 171</td>
<td>473: 176 n. 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>634: 167</td>
<td>493: 150 n. 14, 150 n. 16, 176 n. 78, 179 n. 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>714: 167 n. 56</td>
<td>494: 176 n. 78, 194 n. 114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>724: 143 n. 2, 149</td>
<td>495: 190 n. 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>729: 161 n. 42, 166 n. 54</td>
<td>498: 157 n. 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>729a: 161 n. 42</td>
<td>548: 246 n. 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>720b: 161 n. 42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>821: 161 n. 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>836: 177 n. 80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>837: 161 n. 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>841: 170 n. 65, 253 n. 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>844: 167 n. 56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>845: 179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>847: 253 n. 46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>850: 173, 173 n. 72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>974: 243</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>988: 167 n. 56, 192 n. 111, 246</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>991: 191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>992: 239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000: 242 n. 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: 180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11: 179 n. 84, 253–4 n. 47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13: 187–8 n. 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20: 180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38: 185, 192–3 n. 112</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44: 187–8 n. 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70: 147 n. 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76: 147 n. 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78: 179 n. 84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79: 179 n. 84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83: 179 n. 84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86: 190 n. 107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165: 149–50 n. 13, 157 n. 31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178: 143 n. 2, 151 n. 17, 151 n. 18, 153, 153–4, 180 n. 90, 184 n. 97, 189 n. 105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179: 149, 149–50 n. 13, 190 n. 107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181: 151 n. 18, 187–8 n. 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182: 160 n. 39, 164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183: 149–50 n. 13, 160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>184: 160, 171</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185: 149–50 n. 13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>186: 182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188: 153, 182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189: 188–9 n. 103, 194</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211: 190 n. 107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211: 190 n. 107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tertullian
*De carne Christi*
12: 179

Themistius
*In libros Aristotelis De anima paraphrasis*, ed. Heinze
89–90: 267 n. 73
90. 20–1: 268 n. 76

Theophrastus
*Characters*
23: 33 n. 5
*Fragments*, ed. Fortenbaugh–Huby–Sharples–Gutas
435: 149

Thucydides
2. 36: 81 n. 28

Virgil
*Aeneid*
2. 525–8: 46 n. 30

Xenophanes, 21 DK
B 23–6: 24 n. 79

Xenophon
*Cyropaedia*
1. 6. 7: 5
2. 3. 9: 195

*Memorabilia*
1. 4. 3–18: 105
1. 4. 12: 186
1. 6. 2: 39 n. 20
4. 4. 6: 35 n. 9

*Symposium*
4. 19: 39 n. 20
4. 62: 36–7 n. 14
5. 5–7: 39 n. 20
Notes for Contributors to Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy

1. Articles should be submitted with double line-spacing throughout. At the stage of initial (but not final) submission footnotes may be given in small type at the foot of the page. Page dimensions should be A4 or standard American quarto (8½ x 11”), and ample margins (minimum 1¼” or 32 mm) should be left.

2. Submissions should be made as an anonymized PDF file attached to an e-mail sent to the Editor. Authors are asked to supply an accurate word-count (a) for the main text, and (b) for the notes. The e-mail which serves as a covering letter should come from the address to be used for correspondence on the submission. A postal address should also be provided. If necessary, arrangements for alternative means of submission may be made with the Editor. Authors should note that the version first submitted will be the one adjudicated; unsolicited revised versions cannot be accepted during the adjudication process. 

*The remaining instructions apply to the final version sent for publication, and need not be rigidly adhered to in a first submission.*

3. In the finalized version, the text should be double-spaced and in the same typesize throughout, including displayed quotations and notes. Notes should be numbered consecutively, and may be supplied as either footnotes or endnotes. Any acknowledgements should be placed in an unnumbered first note. Wherever possible, references to primary sources should be built into the text.

4. **Use of Greek and Latin.** Relatively familiar Greek terms such as psychē and polis (but not whole phrases and sentences) may be used in transliteration. Wherever possible, Greek and Latin should not be used in the main text of an article in ways which would impede comprehension by those without knowledge of the languages; for example, where appropriate, the original texts should be accompanied by a translation. This constraint does not apply to footnotes. Greek must be supplied in an accurate form, with all diacritics in place. A note of the system employed for achieving Greek (e.g. GreekKeys, Linguist’s Software) should be supplied to facilitate file conversion.

5. For citations of Greek and Latin authors, house style should be followed. This can be checked in any recent issue of *OSAP* with the help of the Index Locorum. The most exact reference possible should normally be employed, especially if a text is quoted or discussed in detail: for example, line references for Plato (not just Stephanus page and letter) and Aristotle (not just Bekker page and column).

6. In references to books, the first time the book is referred to give the initial(s) and surname of the author (first names are not usually required), and the place and date of publication; where you are abbreviating the
title in subsequent citations, give the abbreviation in square brackets, thus:


Give the volume-number and date of periodicals, and include the full page-extent of articles (including chapters of books):


Where the same book or article is referred to on subsequent occasions, usually the most convenient style will be an abbreviated reference:


**Do not use the author-and-date style of reference:**


7. Authors are asked to supply *in addition*, at the end of the article, a full list of the bibliographical entries cited, alphabetically ordered by (first) author’s surname. Except that the author’s surname should come first, these entries should be identical in form to the first occurrence of each in the article, including where appropriate the indication of abbreviated title:


8. If there are any unusual conventions contributors are encouraged to include a covering note for the copy-editor and/or printer. Please say whether you are using single and double quotation marks for different purposes (otherwise the Press will employ its standard single quotation marks throughout, using double only for quotations within quotations).

9. Authors should send a copy of the final version of their paper in electronic form by attachment to an e-mail. The final version should be in a standard word-processing format, accompanied by a note of the word-processing program used and of the system (*not just the font*) used for producing Greek characters (see point 4 above). This file must be accompanied by a second file, a copy in PDF format of the submitted word-processor file; the PDF file must correspond exactly to the word-processor file. If necessary, arrangements for alternative means of submission may be made with the Editor. With final submission authors should also send, in a separate file, a brief abstract and a list of approximately ten keywords.