

EPICTETUS AND MORAL APPREHENSIVE
IMPRESSIONS IN STOICISM

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The only person who possesses knowledge and virtue, and whose every action is always morally right, is the Sage, the ideal person used by the Stoics as a paradigm in arguing for the possibility of achieving epistemic and moral perfection.¹ The foundation for the Sage's epistemic perfection was the so-called "apprehensive impression" (*phantasia katalēptikē*), the only type of impression whose propositional content is such that it could not turn out false and which, because of this, unmistakably represents the thing that caused the impression.² Our sources have preserved relatively elaborate accounts of how the Stoics thought apprehensive impressions could lead to knowledge about nonmoral situations. However, our sources are less explicit about the following two questions. First, did the Stoics think that there are moral apprehensive impressions? Second, if they did, then are there any similarities and differences between them and nonmoral apprehensive impressions? Finally, how is the moral apprehensive impression supposed to contribute to the moral and practical perfection of the Sage? In this essay, I will argue that there is textual evidence in Epictetus that suggests that the answer to the first question is positive. In answer to the second question, I will try to offer a possible reconstruction of how Epictetus and his Stoic predecessors might have understood moral apprehensive impressions and their relationship to nonmoral apprehensive impressions. Finally, I will attempt to explain how moral apprehensive impressions might provide a foundation for morally perfect action.

I.

The core elements of the Stoic account of the apprehensive impression have been preserved by our sources at some length. According to one of the most common formulations of the Stoic definition reported by Sextus, the apprehensive impression:

is the one that is from something existent [*apo huparchon*]
and is stamped and impressed in accordance with that

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- 1 Cf. Sextus Empiricus (SE) *M* 7.151–152 = LS 41C1–5; Anon. *Herc. pap.* 1020 = LS 41D3; Stob. 2.111,18–112,8 = LS 41G = IG 102.11m; 2.99,3–8 = LS 59N = IG 102.11g; 2.66,14–67,4 = LS 61G = IG 102.5b10. (Bibliographic information for all references can be found in the Select Bibliography at the end of this essay.)
- 2 DL 7.46 = LS 40C; SE *M* 7.247–252 = LS 40E.

existent thing itself, and is of such a kind as could not come about from something that was not existent.³

Unfortunately, interpreting in detail each of the requirements formulated in the definition and how exactly the Stoics thought they should work together is a complex question, and one that is hotly debated among contemporary scholars.⁴ Attempting to offer carefully argued solutions to these controversies would take us well beyond the scope of our present discussion, which is why a few brief remarks will have to suffice. We can say with some confidence that preserved accounts of the apprehensive impression yield something like the following account. Unlike the so-called “empty attraction” (*diakenos elkusmos*), an impression produced by some “effects in us”, i.e. by our minds,⁵ the apprehensive impression has to be caused by something *huparchon*, i.e. by something existent. In the context of their theory of *phantasia katalēptikē*,⁶

3 SE M 7.248 = LS 40E3.

4 See, for example, Frede, “Stoics and Sceptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions”; Frede, “Stoic Epistemology”; Annas, “Stoic Epistemology”; Hankinson, “Stoic Epistemology”; Sedley, “Zeno’s Definition of *phantasia kataleptike*”.

5 SE M 7.241.

6 The word *huparchon* and its verbal form *huparchein* were Stoic technical terms. As Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism”, 89, has correctly noticed, the Stoics used them in more than one sense. Several different translations of the terms *huparchon* and *huparchein* have been offered, and I am not sure that there is one single word in English that can be used consistently to translate these terms in all contexts where they occur. In the context of the Stoic definition of the apprehensive impression, I have opted for translating *huparchon* as “existent” because in English we have at our disposal the verb “to exist” that can correspond to the Greek verb *huparchein*, and because the contrast that the Stoics made between the verbs *huparchein* and *huphistasthai* can conveniently be reflected in English by the contrast between the verbs “to exist” and “to subsist”. Regarding the interpretation of *huparchon* in the definition, two notable proposals are (1) that *huparchon* refers to a fact (*pragma*) or to what is true, which was put forth by Frede, and (2) that it refers to the corporeal object *simpliciter* that is causing the impression. In my opinion, option (2) has been successfully criticized by Sedley, “Zeno’s Definition of *phantasia kataleptike*” (although I disagree with his proposed solution to treat the *apo* in the definition as having representational and not causal meaning). Option (1) is problematic because it seems that the Stoics thought that facts and what is true are incorporeal (cf. SE M 8.12 = LS 33B) and as such they cannot cause apprehensive impressions because the Stoics thought that only corporeals can be causes (*aitia*, Aet. 1.11.5 = LS 55G; cf. Cic. *Acad.* 1.39 = LS 45A; SE M 8.263 = LS 45B). My rendering of *huparchon* as referring to a qualified corporeal object, or *poion*, differs from both interpretations.

it seems that the Stoics used the word *huparchon* to refer to the real, corporeal object that causes the impression and is its “impressor” (*phantaston*).⁷ However, since they thought that corporeal objects are always qualified in some way, i.e. that their corporeal substance always possesses some properties or “qualities” (*poiotēs*), *huparchon* here should be taken to refer not to the corporeal object *simpliciter*, but to a *poion*, a corporeal object that is qualified in a particular way, that is, to the corporeal object together with its corporeal properties. Because of its focus on what causes the impressions, let us call this the Causal Requirement.

In addition to being caused by something existent, the apprehensive impression also has to be in accordance with its impressor, i.e. with the thing that caused it. An impression is in accordance with its impressor when the predicates in the impression’s propositional content correspond to the actual properties of the impressor. For example, if the impression with the propositional content “Dion is walking” was caused by Dion who is actually walking, then the impression would be in accordance with its impressor because the predicate “... is walking” would correctly represent Dion’s property of walking; on the other hand, if it was caused by Dion who is, for example, sitting, then it would not be in accordance with its impressor because the predicate “... is walking” would not correctly represent Dion’s property of sitting.⁸ Let us call this the Accordance Requirement.

Finally, the impression that is caused by an existent thing and is in accordance with it in addition has to be “of such a kind as could not come about from something that was not existent”. This third requirement emerged

7 Aet. 4.12.1–5 = LS 39B4.

8 Cf. Stobaeus 1.106,18–23 = LS 51B4. The Stoics thought that predicates are paradigmatically expressed by verbs (cf. DL 7.58; Ammon. *In Ar. De int.* 44.19–45.6). From the summary account of Stoic logic in DL 7.49–83 where a number of examples of propositions occurs, it looks like they made a conscious effort to avoid expressing predicates in the form of copula + adjective or copula + noun. However, a few examples of propositions that contain such predicates occur in Stoic contexts. Some examples are propositions “This [man] is kind” (*philanthrōpos estin outos*, DL 7.70), “Dion is a horse”, “Dion is an animal” (*hippos esti Diōn, zōon esti Diōn*, DL 7.78), “Something is a man” (*ti estin anthrōpos*, SE M 11.8). No surviving source reports on how the Stoics understood predicates in such propositions. If they strictly held to the doctrine that predicates should be properly expressed only by verbs, then perhaps they thought that every expression of the form copula + adjective or copula + noun is only a loose paraphrase of the corresponding verbal form. It seems to me, however, that this uncertainty does not affect the main points of my analysis of moral impressions—like, for example, “prudence is good”—whose predicates are often expressed in the form copula + adjective/noun.

from the lengthy debate the Stoics led with their chief opponents, the skeptical Academics. The Academics argued that unless the apprehensive impression is capable of distinguishing between two extremely similar but different objects, then it couldn't provide foundations for the achievement of the demanding ideal of knowledge of the Sage. For example, if the Sage's impression were to report "This tall man wearing a skull-cap is Castor" even in the situation in which the impression was caused by Castor's twin brother Polydeuces,⁹ then the Sage would not have apprehension (*katalēpsis*), which is a necessary step towards achieving knowledge (*epistēmē*).¹⁰ The Sage never assents to nonapprehensive impressions because even in cases when they are true, they *could* nevertheless turn out false.¹¹ That is why the third requirement is sometimes formulated as stating that the apprehensive impression is "of such a kind that it could not become false". In other words, the apprehensive impression has to be true not only at the time it is entertained, but *always*, which is what makes it unmistakable. One way of understanding this requirement is that unlike true nonapprehensive impressions, which are true in actual situations, apprehensive impressions are true in all counterfactual situations as well. In cases involving impressions about morally neutral things like discriminating between extremely similar but distinct particular objects, the Stoics relied on the principle that each existent object is ontologically unique to ensure that this requirement is met. Their strategy was to argue that given that every corporeal object is ontologically unique, apprehension is possible because the apprehensive impression captures that uniqueness and guarantees that no apprehensive impression could mistakenly represent its impressor. Since it is able to capture the ontological uniqueness of its impressor, the apprehensive impression about Castor would be such that, if it were caused by Castor, it would represent its impressor as being Castor, and if it were not caused by Castor (but, for example, by his twin Polydeuces), it would not represent its impressor as being Castor. Thus, it would allow the person entertaining such an impression to discriminate between actual situations in which the content of their impression is true and possible counterfactual

9 As mythical twin brothers known for their extreme similarity, Castor and Polydeuces were often used by the Academics in their arguments against the Stoic theory of the apprehensive impression, e.g. in *SE M* 7.410 (= LS 40H4).

10 The Stoics considered knowledge to be a system of assents to apprehensive impressions that are not changeable by reason (Stob. 2.73,19–21 = LS 41H1; cf. Stob. 2.111,18–112,8 = LS 41G).

11 *SE M* 7.152 = LS 41C4; cf. Cic. *Acad.* 2.112. It is important to note that for the Stoics the truth value is a temporal property of impressions (see Bobzien, "Logic", 87–88), i.e. a same impression that is true at one time (e.g. "It is day" when indeed it is day) can be false at another (e.g. "It is day" when it is in fact night).

situations in which the content of their impression would be false. Because of this, let us call this the Discrimination Requirement.¹²

Therefore, we can conclude that the Stoics thought that an impression is apprehensive if and only if it meets the following three requirements:

- (1) The Causal Requirement: the impression must be caused by an impressor that is existent;
- (2) The Accordance Requirement: the actual properties of its impressor must be represented by the corresponding predicates correctly in the impression;
- (3) The Discrimination Requirement: the impression must be such that it enables the subject to discriminate between actual situations in which the content of the impression is true and possible counterfactual situations in which its content would be false.

II.

In the surviving texts about Stoicism, a vast majority of examples of apprehensive impressions are of those that refer to morally neutral states of affairs. Typically, they rely on cases of discriminating between extremely similar but distinct objects we have mentioned in the previous section. Apprehensive impressions are also mentioned in Arrian's report on Epictetus's philosophy, although only a few times.¹³ One place in particular, however, suggests that Epictetus thought that apprehensive impressions about moral states of affairs exist, and that they are necessary for the achievement of moral and practical perfection. In *Diss.* 3.8.1–4, Epictetus is reported as saying:

In the same way as we exercise ourselves to deal with sophisticated questionings, we should exercise ourselves daily to deal with impressions [*phantasias*], for these too face us with questions. So-and-so's son is dead. Answer, "That lies outside the sphere of choice, it is not a bad thing [*kakon*]." So-and-so has been disinherited by his father; what do you think of that? "That lies outside the sphere of choice, it is not a bad thing." Caesar has condemned him. "That lies outside the sphere of choice, it is not a bad thing." He was grieved by all this. "That lies outside the sphere of choice, it is not a bad thing." He has borne it nobly. "That lies within the sphere of

12 My choice of the name for this requirement is an homage to Alvin Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge", who has formulated a similar requirement for the reliability of perceptual knowledge.

13 As far as I can see there are only three occurrences: *Diss.* 3.8.5, 4.4.13, and *Ench.* 45.

choice, it is a good thing [*agathon*].” If we acquire this habit, we shall make progress [*prokopsomen*]; for we shall never assent to anything unless we get an apprehensive impression [*phantasia katalēptikē*] of it.

Impressions that Epictetus talks about here are the ones that attribute moral predicates, for example “good” and “bad”, to things like someone’s death, someone’s disinheritance by his own father, someone’s condemnation by a powerful person such as Caesar, someone’s distress about these calamities, and someone’s endurance in the face of them. According to him, one could achieve moral progress (*prokopē*) only if one acquired the habit of assenting to apprehensive impressions about morally relevant things, which, as we have seen in section I above, means impressions that correctly and unmistakably attribute moral predicates to impressors, i.e. things that cause the impressions. Correct attribution of predicates to impressors, or “the application of preconceptions to particulars” as Epictetus often calls it, is one of the central themes in his philosophy. In several places (*Diss.* 1.2.6, 22.2–9; 2.11.3–12, 17.6–16; 4.1.41–45) he discusses the application of moral “preconceptions” (*prolēpseis*) such as good (*agathon*), bad (*kakon*), advantageous (*sumpheron*), disadvantageous (*asumpheron*), just (*dikaion*), courageous (*andreios*), etc. to particular actions.¹⁴ They were called “preconceptions” because Epictetus, like other Stoics, believed that, unlike typically nonmoral concepts such as, e.g., “white”, that are acquired through instruction and attention,¹⁵ moral concepts develop from our natural

14 Epictetus sometimes also talks about nonmoral preconceptions, for example about the preconception of the philosopher, the carpenter, the musician, etc. (*Diss.* 4.8.6–10). However, most contexts where he discusses the correct application of preconceptions to particulars are cases of moral preconceptions.

15 Cf. Aet. 4.11.1–4 = LS 39E. The Stoics made a technical distinction between the notions of “conception” (*ennoia*) and “concept” (*ennoēma*). As Aetius reports, according to them, *ennoia* refers to the physical processes in the corporeal soul that occur when we think of something (cf. also Plut. *Com. not.* 1084F–1085A = LS 39F), while *ennoēma* is the incorporeal result of that process. The Stoics clearly thought that the ontological status of *ennoēmata* was questionable. They called them “figments” (*phantasmata*, Stob. 1.136,21–137,6 = LS 30A; DL 7.60 = LS 30C1–2), entities that are analogue to purely fictional things like Centaurs. Accordingly, it seems that they thought that all propositions involving concepts should be understood as paraphrases of conditional propositions that range over corporeal particulars (see end of section III below). For example, the proposition “Man is a rational mortal animal” involving the concept “man” should be understood as a paraphrase of the conditional “If something is a man, that thing is a rational mortal animal”. Presumably, the word “man” in the conditional no longer refers to a concept, but to the common quality possessed by all men (cf. DL

inborn tendencies to pursue things that are in accordance with our nature, and to stay away from the things that are not.¹⁶ In keeping with the Stoic orthodoxy, Epictetus also calls them “innate concepts” (*emphutoi ennoiai*, *Diss.* 2.11.3) and claims that, because of their innateness:

Preconceptions are common to all men, and one preconception does not contradict another. For who among us does not assume that the good [*agathon*] is profitable and something to be chosen [*haireton*], and that in every circumstance we ought to seek and pursue it? [*Diss.* 1.22.1 = LS 40S1]

For who does not have a preconception of bad [*kakou*], that it is harmful, that it is to be avoided [*pheukton*], that it is something to get rid of in every way? [*Diss.* 4.1.44]

However, although moral preconceptions do not contradict each other, conflicts often arise when we try to apply them to particulars. For example, members of different cultures have the same preconception of piety, that it is something that should be put above all else and pursued in all circumstances. The conflict arises when people try to apply the preconception of piety to particulars such as someone’s act of eating pork: one believes that someone’s act of eating pork is pious, another that it is impious (*Diss.* 1.22.4). Since these conflicting beliefs cannot both be true, Epictetus argues that, just as in the case of deciding whether some object is black or soft we use a criterion to determine the truth, we should have a criterion for deciding which of our moral beliefs are true (*Diss.* 1.11.9–15). This criterion cannot be mere opining (*dokein*), but something higher (*anōteros*) than mere opining (*Diss.* 2.11.11–12). Although Epictetus does not explicitly name it, he does think that such a criterion exists (*Diss.* 2.11.17). Since the Stoics thought that the apprehensive impression is

7.58 = LS 33M). Since this quality is something corporeal, the predicate “is man” in this sense can be predicated of something without ontological complications (see n. 8 above for Stoic understanding of predicates). If Epictetus is following the Stoic classification of “preconceptions” (*prolēpseis*) and concepts (*ennoēmata*) under the same genus, then applying moral preconceptions to particulars would seem to amount to predicating the incorporeal products of the process of moral conception (*ennoia*) to particular corporeal objects.

16 Although this has been subject to controversy (see, e.g., Sandbach, “Ennoia and ἸΠΟΛΗΨΙΣ in the Stoic Theory of Knowledge”), I think that Jackson-McCabe (“The Stoic Theory of Implanted Preconceptions”) has persuasively argued that Epictetus’s position on the innateness of moral preconceptions was fully in agreement with the doctrines of the early Stoics.

the criterion of truth,¹⁷ and since Epictetus believed that moral apprehensive impressions are possible, I think we can conclude that the criterion Epictetus had in mind here was the moral apprehensive impression.

In addition to the evidence that Epictetus might have thought that apprehensive moral impressions exist, there is some indirect evidence that this idea was not Epictetus's own invention, but a part of the orthodox Stoic doctrine. The well-attested orthodox Stoic approach to defining virtues and vices as instances of knowledge and ignorance,¹⁸ which was a part of the doctrine from the very beginning, suggests that the early Stoics too thought that moral impressions could be apprehensive. They defined prudence as knowledge (*epistēmē*) of what is good, bad, indifferent, or neither of these,¹⁹ and thought that this knowledge is related to how *kathēkonta*, or befitting actions, come into being.²⁰ We know that for the Stoics, *epistēmē* is not only a system of beliefs that are firm and unshakable, but also a system of beliefs composed of assents to only one type of impressions: those that are apprehensive.²¹ It follows then that prudence is a system of firm assents to impressions about what things are good, bad, indifferent or neither, i.e. of assents to moral impressions about good, bad, etc. things that must be apprehensive.²² Therefore, it seems that there are some

17 DL 7.54 = LS 40A; SE M 7.152 = LS 41C5.

18 Stob. 2.59,4–60,8 = LS 61H1–5 (partially) = IG 102.5b1; cf. DL 7.92–93, which, despite the lacuna in 92, undoubtedly reports virtues as being defined in terms of knowledge and vices in terms of ignorance.

19 DL 7.92; Stob. 2.59,4–7 = LS 61H1 = IG 102.5b1.

20 *ten men phronēsīn peri ta kathēkonta ginesthai*, Stob. 2.60,12 = IG 2.102.5b2.

21 Stob. 2.73,16–74,13 = LS 41H = IG 102.5l.

22 Apparently, for the Stoics, prudence occupied a special place among the virtues.

For example, it seems that Zeno used to define the other three virtues in terms of prudence (Plut. *Virt. mor.* 441A = LS 61B5; *St. rep.* 1034C = LS 61C1–2), and Apollophanes even went so far as to claim that prudence is the only virtue (DL 7.92). This is not surprising given that the Stoics thought that all cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance, justice, and courage) are physically inseparable and that they differ only in their respective topics (Stob. 2.63,6–64,12 = LS 61D & 63G = IG 102.5b5; DL 7.125–126). Namely, they defined temperance as a virtue primarily concerned with impulses (Stob. 2.60,13 = IG 2.102.5b2), which consists in knowledge of what is worth choosing (*haireton*), what is worth avoiding (*phuekton*), and what is indifferent (*oudeteron*) (Stob. 2.59,8–9 = LS 61H2 = IG 102.5b1); also, they defined courage as the virtue that concerns instances of standing firm (*peri tas hupomonas*, Stob. 2.60,14). It is not hard to see how temperance and courage can both be based on prudence, i.e. on judgments that something is good, bad, or indifferent, because the Stoics defined good things as those that are worth choosing (*haireta*) and worth standing firmly by (*hupomeneta*), and bad things as the opposites of these (Stob. 2.78,7–17 =

reasons to think that the existence of moral apprehensive impressions and their importance for moral action was not Epictetus's invention, but a Stoic orthodoxy.

III.

We have seen that there is some evidence that Epictetus thought that moral apprehensive impressions exist, and that it is possible that in this he was following the earlier Stoics. Unfortunately, no detailed accounts of these impressions have been preserved in the surviving texts. In the remainder of this essay, I will attempt to provide a reconstruction of how Epictetus and perhaps the other Stoics might have understood moral apprehensive impressions by relying on their theory of nonmoral apprehensive impressions and other relevant parts of their philosophical doctrine. However, the reader should keep in mind that, because of the lack of direct textual evidence, this reconstruction will necessarily have to involve some level of speculation.

In the previous section, we have suggested that moral apprehensive impressions are impressions that correctly and unmistakably predicate some moral property of some object. In other words, the paradigmatic form of the moral apprehensive impression would be “ x is M ”, where x is some particular corporeal object and M is a predicate corresponding to some moral property possessed by the object. If so, then moral apprehensive impressions would be very similar to nonmoral apprehensive impressions. This should not be very surprising since according to the Stoics, moral objects and moral properties are an integral part of the corporeal world, and the location problem for moral properties does not arise in their metaphysics.²³ They claimed that all moral objects, for example, particular instances of prudence, temperance, courage, etc., are corporeal,²⁴ and that everything that is good is a body.²⁵ Furthermore, since actions as dispositions of particular agents' corporeal souls are also corporeal objects, they are properties of agents' corporeal substance. Because of this, the Stoics say that, just like nonmoral properties, moral properties such as being good and being bad *huparchein*, i.e. “exist” or “belong” to objects,²⁶ and thus provide a basis for truthful, substantial predication of moral predicates to particular objects.²⁷ Consequently, moral apprehensive impressions, just like nonmoral ones, are caused by *huparchonta*, i.e. by existent, particular corporeal

IG 102.6f). Consequentially, this would mean that they thought that all virtues depended on the knowledge of what is good, bad, indifferent or neither, i.e. on apprehensive impressions of the form “ x is M ”.

23 For one example of an influential discussion of the location problem for ethics, see Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics*, especially chapters 1 and 5.

24 Stob. 2.64,20–22 = IG 102.5b7.

25 Sen. *Ep.* 117.2 = LS 60S.

26 Stob. 2.68,24–25 = IG 102.5c.

27 Cf. Stob. 2.97,19–21 = LS 33J1 = IG 102.11f.

objects, as is testified by many impressions offered by Epictetus as illustrations in his discussion of the correct application of preconceptions to particulars, for example, “So-and-so’s son’s death is not bad”, “So-and-so’s disinheritance is not bad”, “His grief because of all this is bad”, “His standing firm in the face of all this is good”, etc.²⁸ For this reason, moral apprehensive impressions of the form “*x* is *M*” would have no problem meeting the Causal Requirement we described in section I above, which states that apprehensive impressions must be caused by something *huparchon*. In addition, since the Stoics thought that apprehensive impressions, as impressions caused by *huparchonta* that accurately represent their objects, express states of affairs or facts (*pragmata*), they probably thought that moral apprehensive impressions, which are also caused by *huparchonta* and accurately represent their objects, express moral states of affairs or moral facts. In other words, for the Stoics, that Dion’s prudence is good is a fact as much as the fact that Dion’s hair is brown.

On the other hand, even if some impressions of the form “*x* is *M*” have the capacity of being apprehensive this does not imply that all moral impressions have the same capacity. Obviously, moral impressions that falsely attribute some moral property to their impressors—such as, for example, the impression that Dion’s cowardice is good—cannot be apprehensive.²⁹ What is less obvious but very important for our present discussion, however, is that since according to the Stoics no universal impression can be apprehensive, no universal moral impression can be apprehensive either. This point may seem surprisingly strong given the abundance and the importance of universal moral statements in the extant texts on Stoic ethics. Nevertheless, our evidence clearly suggests that the Stoics thought that universals are concepts (*ennoēmata*) and that concepts are not existent things or *huparchonta*, only mere figments (*phantasmata*) of our mind,³⁰ so as such they cannot cause apprehensive impressions. As we have seen in section I, the Casual Requirement clearly prevents any impression that is caused by “empty attraction” from being apprehensive, and according to the Stoics, figments are things we are attracted to in empty attractions.³¹ Accordingly, unlike impressions of the form “*x* is *M*” (for example, “Dion’s prudence is good”), which are impressions about corporeal particulars (in our example, Dion’s prudence), impressions of the form “*X* is *M*” (for example, “Prudence is good”), which are impressions about universals (in our example, the generic Prudence), cannot be apprehensive because they are impressions caused by figments of the mind. In other words, although particular moral facts exist in the Stoic universe, universal moral facts do not.

28 Cf. *Diss.* 3.8.1–4.

29 In section V below we will discuss another class of moral impressions that are true, but nevertheless fail to be apprehensive.

30 Aet. 1.10.5 = LS 30B; Stob. 1.136,21–137,6 = LS 30A; DL 7.61 = LS 30C2.

31 Aet. 4.12.1–5 = LS 39B; cf. DL 7.49–50 = LS 39A1–3.

This, of course, does not imply that impressions about universals are superfluous and useless. On the contrary, since all definitions and divisions have the form of universal impressions, they are basic tools in Stoic logic and dialectic, and ultimately provide foundations for the Sage's knowledge.³² Namely, the Stoics considered universal impressions to be useful paraphrases of conditionals that involve impressions about particulars. According to them, all universal moral impressions of the form "X is M" are generalized impressions (*katholika*) that stand for impressions expressing conditionals "if x is X, then x is M".³³ For example, the universal impression "prudence is good" would stand for the impression "if some particular thing is prudent, then that thing is good". Furthermore, they thought that universal impressions can be true, and that their truth depends on the truth of the impressions about particulars over which they range; for example, "Prudence is good" is true if and only if all particular prudent things are good. Thus, although themselves nonapprehensive, universal moral impressions of the form "X is M" and their truth-values crucially depend on particular moral impressions of the form "x is M", and the latter, as we have seen, are capable of being apprehensive. Consequently, knowledge of universal moral truths can be secured through the apprehension of particular moral truths, that is, through moral apprehensive impressions of the form "x is M".

IV.

In the previous section, I have argued that Epictetus and the Stoics would have probably thought that the moral apprehensive impression shares some important similarities with the nonmoral apprehensive impression: they are both caused by existent objects, and they are both perceptual impressions about corporeal objects. In this section, I would like to suggest that there is one crucial difference between moral and nonmoral apprehensive impressions. Namely, it seems that the Stoics thought that, unlike nonmoral apprehensive impressions that are merely descriptions of their impressors, moral apprehensive impressions are not only descriptions, but also *evaluations* of corporeal objects.³⁴

32 See, e.g., DL 7.60–62 = LS 32C and Aug. *Civ. dei* 8.7 = LS 32F; cf. Long, "Dialectic and the Stoic Sage".

33 SE M 11.8–11 = LS 30I.

34 Accepting this dual nature of moral impressions might cause some reluctance among those contemporary meta-ethicists used to sharp distinctions between descriptions and evaluations. However, I see no reason to attribute some form of such distinction to the Stoics. This is not a sign that, unlike contemporary ethicists, they did not understand the importance of this distinction. On the contrary, I think that their idea that some descriptions are also at the same time evaluations was a sophisticated philosophical maneuver that (if successful) allowed them to avoid many problems that plague contemporary meta-ethicists participating in the debate about ethical cognitivism and noncognitivism.

This dual nature of moral impressions is the result of the Stoic theory of the innate origin of moral concepts we have already mentioned. Although they refer to corporeal moral properties of objects, there is some evidence that the Stoics thought that moral predicates also carry meanings³⁵ that indicate the agent's potential pursuit-type or evasion-type *stance* towards corporeal objects that possess these properties. In other words, it seems that according to the Stoics, every moral predicate is not only a descriptive predicate, but also an evaluative predicate. That's why they say that, for example, everything that is good (*agathon*) is also "worth choosing" (*haireton*), and everything that is bad (*kakon*) is worth avoiding (*pheukton*),³⁶ and, accordingly, that everything that has some nonabsolute value (*axia*) is also "worth taking" (*lēpton*), and everything that has some disvalue (*apaxia*) is "worth not taking" (*alēpton*).³⁷ The general idea behind this dual function of evaluative predicates is that some object is, for example, valuable to us not simply because we think of it as being worthy of taking, but because it really possesses properties that contribute to our nature and well-being, just as, for example, food satisfies our hunger not simply because we think so, but because of the nutrients that are really contained in it. Thus, since moral predicates are both descriptive and evaluative, the Stoics thought that the impression that, for example, some *x* is good not only describes *x* as being good, but also at the same time evaluates *x* as being worth choosing, i.e. as the potential object of some agent's choice.³⁸ It is by virtue of this dual function of moral predicates that moral impressions provide the basis for action, which will be discussed in section V below.

The evaluative nature of moral impressions in Stoicism and the possibility of moral apprehensive impressions have recently caused considerable controversies in interpreting the Stoic position, so I will devote the rest of this section to solving some of these controversies. Gisela Striker has argued that for the Stoics, evaluative predicates are not perceptual,³⁹ and that apprehensive impressions must be perceptual,⁴⁰ from which she concluded that moral/evaluative impressions cannot be apprehensive. Brennan accepts Striker's first

35 The Stoics did make the distinction between the meaning of a word, "the signification" (*sēmainomenon*), and the corporeal thing it refers to, "the name-bearer" (*tunchanon*); see, for example, *M* 8.11–12 = LS 33B.

36 *Stob.* 2.72,19–20 = IG 102.5i.

37 *Stob.* 2.79,18–80,21 = IG 102.7a–b; 82,20–84,3 = IG 102.7e–f; 84,18–85,11 = IG 102.7g.

38 *Stob.* 2.75,1–6 = IG 102.5o; 80,14–21 = IG 102.7b; 82,20–83,9 = IG 102.7e.

That concepts like *haireton* and *pheukton* represent parts of the meanings of preconceptions "good" and "bad" is suggested by Epict. *Diss.* 1.22.1 = LS 40S1 and 4.1.44 (quoted above).

39 "Skeptical Strategies", 70–72.

40 Striker, "Κριτήριο τῆς ἀληθείας", 73–76.

premise (that moral/evaluative impressions are nonperceptual), but disagrees with her conclusion (that all moral/evaluative impressions are nonapprehensive), so he is led to deny Striker's second premise, that all apprehensive impressions must be perceptual.⁴¹ Both views get something right about the Stoic position, but ultimately rely on the premise that the Stoics thought that impressions cannot be both perceptual and evaluative. This premise is, as I will argue, false. Namely, according to Plutarch:

[Chrysippus] says that goods and bads [*tagatha kai ta kaka*] are perceptible [*aisthēta*], writing as follows in *On the end* book I: '[...] Not only are the passions [*pathē*], grief and fear and the like, perceptible along with [people's] appearances, but also it is possible to perceive theft and adultery and similar things, and in general, folly and cowardice and many other vices, and not only joy and benefactions and many other instances of right conduct [*katorthōseōn*] but also prudence and courage and the remaining virtues.'⁴²

The passage clearly states that Chrysippus thought that moral properties of corporeal objects, such as being good or being bad, are perceptible.⁴³ Furthermore, it seems that he also thought that particular instantiations of actions, such as right actions (*katorthōmata*), are perceptible as well. It is important to note that Chrysippus does not say only that actions in general (*energeia*) are perceptible, but also that right actions are perceived *as* right and vicious actions *as* vicious, which implies that they are perceived in an evaluative way. In addition, at another place Chrysippus is cited as saying that "appropriation" (*oikeiōsis*), another important Stoic evaluative concept, is perception (*aisthēsis*) of what is appropriate.⁴⁴

All this suggests that the Stoics thought that impressions attributing evaluative predicates to corporeal objects are perceptual. In fact, this is not surprising given the Stoics' position on the relationship between properties of corporeal objects and predicates in perceptual impressions about these objects. Namely, according to them, moral properties of the corporeal object cause evaluative predicates in the perceptual impression about the object in exactly the same way in which nonmoral properties of the corporeal object

41 Brennan, *The Stoic Life*, 75–79.

42 Plut. *St. rep.* 1042E–F = LS 60R.

43 *Contra* Brennan (*The Stoic Life*, 76), who seems to think that being good is a property that is nonperceptual.

44 Plut. *St. rep.* 1038C; this is in direct contradiction with Brennan's claim ("Stoic Epistemology", 324) that the property of being *oikeion* is a nonperceptual property. For the Stoic concept of *oikeiōsis*, see e.g. DL 7.85–86 = LS 57A.

cause descriptive predicates in the descriptive impression about the object. For example, Zeno is reported as saying that corporeal instantiations of prudence (*phronēsis*) and temperance (*sōphrosunē*) in objects cause moral predicates “being prudent” (*phronein*) and “being temperate” (*sōphronein*) in impressions about these objects.⁴⁵ Since moral impressions of the form “*x* is *M*”—which are, as we have seen, at the same time evaluative—are caused by properties of corporeal objects, there is no reason to assume that the Stoics thought that they cannot be perceptual.

The likely motivation behind the resistance towards the idea that evaluative predicates are perceptual might lie in certain elements of the Stoic theory of the origin of moral concepts. Namely, according to Diogenes Laertius, the Stoics thought that all impressions obtained through sense organs are perceptual (*aisthētikai*), while nonperceptual (*ouk aisthētikai*) impressions are those obtained through thought, for example impressions about “incorporeals and other things acquired by reason”.⁴⁶ Although moral impressions of the form “*x* is *M*” are impressions about corporeal objects obtained through sense organs, it is not hard to assume that all impressions that involve moral concepts nevertheless fall into the category of nonperceptual because the Stoics thought that moral concepts, unlike descriptive ones such as “white”, are innate, formed from the principles within us,⁴⁷ and acquired spontaneously.⁴⁸ The fact that the meanings of evaluative concepts possess an element that does not come from the senses, however, does not imply that evaluative concepts are nonperceptual, at least not in any sense of the notion of “nonperceptual” that the Stoics would use. Although evaluative concepts partially originate from the innate principles in us, the Stoics thought that their purpose and applications are inseparable from perceptual objects.⁴⁹ In fact, as Diogenes himself reveals later,⁵⁰ by “other things acquired by reason” the Stoics most likely had in mind nonevident things

45 Stob. 1.138,14–139,4 = LS 55A. In SE *M* 9.211 = LS 55B and Clem. *Strom.*

8.9.26.3–4 = LS 55C, the same explanation is offered for the causal origin of purely descriptive predicates such as “being cut”, “being burnt”, etc. There is no indication that the Stoics thought that the causal origin of moral predicates is in any way different from that of nonmoral predicates.

46 DL 7.51 = LS 39A4.

47 Plut. *Comm. not.* 1070C.

48 Aet. 4.11.1–4 = LS 39E.

49 In *Fin.* 3.20–22 = LS 59D, for example, Cicero explains how the function of the concepts such as “valuable” (*aestimabile*, Gr. *axian*) and “befitting” (*officium*, Gr. *kathēkon*), after they develop from the “starting-points of nature”, is to enable us to actually select objects that are valuable and to perform befitting actions. Indeed, it is hard to see how one could even develop the concept of something valuable without perceiving valuable objects.

50 DL 7.53 = LS 39D7.

(*adēla*) that are conceived through “transition” (*metabasis*) from perceptual things via sign inference or demonstration, for example, like when by perceiving sweat we conceive unperceivable pores in the skin.⁵¹ Because of this, I think it is best to conclude that the Stoics thought that nonperceptual impressions are only those impressions that are about nonevident things and incorporeal objects. However, as we have seen above, the Stoics understood moral apprehensive impressions as impressions about particular corporeal objects, and moral properties as perceivable corporeal properties of those objects. Therefore, it seems that they would classify moral apprehensive impressions among the perceptual impressions.

v.

So far, we have argued that there is evidence that the Stoics thought that moral impressions are both descriptions and evaluations of corporeal objects, and that there are no obstacles to assuming that the Stoics classified them as perceptual impressions. In this section, we will discuss another group of evaluative impressions—those that have the form “it befits *A* to do *K*” or “*K* is befitting for *A*”, that is, impressions that some particular action *K* is *kathēkon* for the agent *A*—because the Stoics thought that a subclass of impressions of this form, called “impulsive impressions”, provides the basis for rational action. First of all, let me say that given everything we have said so far, there is nothing in the Stoic system that prevents at least some impressions of the form “it befits *A* to do *K*” or “*K* is befitting for *A*”, that is, impressions that some particular action *K* is *kathēkon* for the agent *A*, from being apprehensive. Several places in Epictetus mention such impressions: for example, “it will befit it [viz. the foot] to step into mud”;⁵² or “it befits you now to be sick, and now to make a voyage and run risks, and now to be in want, and on occasion to die before your time”.⁵³ They are all examples of impressions that evaluate some corporeal thing, that is, a particular action of some agent, as being befitting. For example, in the impression “it befits Dion to make a voyage”, Dion’s act of making the voyage is a corporeal object that is being evaluated as something befitting for Dion. In this respect, impressions that state that some action of the agent is befitting are a species of the genus of moral impressions of the form “*x* is *M*”, so there is no reason to assume that the Stoics would have thought that they are incapable of being apprehensive.

51 See, for example, *SE M* 9.393–394; the Stoic origin is suggested by mentioning the same methods of conceiving things (similarity, composition, analogy, transposition) listed in *DL* 7.53. On conceiving nonevident things from perceptual things via sign inference and demonstration, see e.g. *SE PH* 2.104–106 = *LS* 35C, 2.140 = *LS* 36B7.

52 *Diss.* 2.5.24: *kathēxei auton eis pēlon embainein*.

53 *Diss.* 2.5.25: *nun men soi nosēsai kathēkei, nun de pleusai kai kinduneusai, nun d’ aporēthēnai, pro hōras d’ estin hot’ apothanein*. Cf. also *Ench.* 42.

Does this mean that for the Stoics, impulsive impressions, as a species of the genus of impressions of the form “it befits *A* to do *K*”, are also capable of being apprehensive? Unfortunately, the answer to this question is much harder to discern, but it seems that there are reasons to think that they aren’t. According to Stobaeus, the Stoics thought that all rational action is initiated by “an impulsive impression [*phantasia hormētikē*] of something immediately befitting [*kathēkontos*]”;⁵⁴ i.e. by assent to such an impression, which activates the agent’s impulse (*hormē*) towards the befitting action. The befitting action mentioned in the impulsive impression is expressed in the form of a predicate (*katēgorēma*), always as a verb in infinitive, for example, “being prudent” (*phronein*) or “going on an embassy” (*presbeuiein*).⁵⁵ Presumably, the role of the word “immediately” (*autothen*) in Stobaeus’s report indicates that the Stoics thought that the impulsive impression also contains an indexical element (something like “for me, now”), whose function is to associate the *kathēkon* in the impulsive impression with the particular agent entertaining the impression and the practical context in which his action is to be executed.⁵⁶ Thus, for the Stoics, impulsive impressions most likely had the form “it befits me to *K* now”, where *K* is the agent’s potential action expressed as a predicate. Note that impulsive impressions are very similar to the impressions of the form “it befits *A* to do *K*”, i.e. that some agent’s action is befitting, which we’ve discussed in the previous paragraph. The difference between these and impulsive impressions is that the latter are always entertained in the agent’s first-person perspective. For example, the impression “it befits me to be sick” (*kathēkei moi nosēsai*)⁵⁷ is impulsive, while the impression “it befits

54 *phantasian hormētikēn tou kathēkontos autothen*, Stob. 2.86,17–8 = LS 53 Q1 = IG 102.9. This formulation has inspired Brennan (“Stoic Moral Psychology”, 268) to argue that impulsive impressions typically have the form “it is *K* that *p*”, where *K* stands for *kathēkon* (or other relevant terms such as *oikeion*, *eulogon*, or *sumpheron*), and *p* stands for some candidate action.

55 Cf. Stob. 2.86,1–7 = IG 102.8–8a.

56 See LS 2.318, comm. on 53Q.

57 This seems to be supported by another set of Epictetus’s examples. In *Diss.* 1.22.14, he mentions several impressions linked in a conditional: “if it profits me to have a farm [*sumpherei moi agron echein*], then it profits me to take it away from my neighbor [*sumpherei moi kai apelesthai auton tou plēsion*]; if it profits me to have a cloak [*sumpherei moi himation echein*], then it profits me to steal it from a bath [*sumpherei moi kai klepsai auto ek balaneiou*]”. For Epictetus, impressions that something is profitable (*sumpheron*) have the same motivational function as impressions that something is *kathēkon* (*Diss.* 1.18.1; 1.28.5; cf. Brennan, “Stoic Moral Psychology”, 268). If every action that is *sumpheron* is also *kathēkon*, then it seems that Epictetus thought that impulsive impressions in Greek have the form *kathēkei moi* + action that is to be performed. This is also confirmed by certain instances in Seneca, for example, in *Ep.* 113.18: “It befits me to walk” (*oportet me*

you to be sick' or "being sick is befitting" isn't. The reason is that my assent to the impressions "it befits to be sick" or "it befits you to be sick now" need not cause me to do anything, because the former would be an impression about a universal fact that it *kathēkei* to be sick in general, while the latter would be an impression of what *kathēkei* to you, not of what *kathēkei* to me. Stobaeus reports that the impulsive impression is an impression "of something immediately *kathēkon*", which, as we have seen, means that it necessarily has to be an impression of what is *kathēkon* to me as the agent who is performing the action.

However, this difference in perspective that distinguishes impulsive impressions from non-impulsive impressions that something is *kathēkon* seems to prevent impulsive impressions from being apprehensive. Namely, we have already mentioned that my impulse towards some potential action is stimulated by my assent to the impulsive impression that some action is befitting for me.⁵⁸ According to the Stoics, my impulse is directed towards the predicate in the impulsive impression identified as being *kathēkon*,⁵⁹ and *eo ipso* results in my acquiring the property that corresponds to the action expressed by the predicate.⁶⁰ For example, my assent to the impulsive impression "it befits me to

ambulare) and "it befits me to sit" (*oportet me sedere*).

58 Stob. 2.88,1–7 = LS 331 = IG 102.9b. Here, I follow the standard interpretation exemplified by Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 56–66 (cf. LS 2.200; Brennan, *The Stoic Life*, 87–88).

59 I think that this follows from Stob. 2.97,15–98,6 (= LS 33J = IG 102.11f). There, we are told that advantages (*ōphelēmata*) are "to be chosen" (*hairetea*), and that they are predicates corresponding to good things. *Hairetea*, or things that are "to be chosen", are directed at predicates, just as impulses are. From Stob. 2.86,2–3, it is clear that the Stoics thought that *ōphelēmata* are one species of the genus of *kathēkonta*. If we assume that this means that *hairetea* are directed at the same predicates as impulses, it follows that impulse is directed at the predicate describing the *kathēkon*. In other words, while prudence (*phronēsis*) is a good thing, the predicate "being prudent" (*phronein*) is a *kathēkon*, and in an impulsive impression involving this *kathēkon*, impulse would be directed toward the agent's possession of prudence, i.e. achieving the state in which the predicate "being prudent" can be truthfully applied to him. I see no reason to assume that the Stoics thought that the same does not also hold for *kathēkonta* that are not *ōphelēmata*, for example for the so-called intermediate proper functions (*mesa kathēkonta*), such as "walking" (*peripatein*, cf. Stob. 2.97,4–5 = LS 59M4) or "getting married" (*gamein*, cf. Stob. 2.86,3), and thus for the whole genus of *kathēkonta*.

60 For arguments that the phrase "directed at" (*hormē/horman epi + acc.*) in this context applies here to both the corporeal action and the incorporeal predicate describing the action, see Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 272, n. 53.

walk” initiates impulse towards the predicate “to walk”, and the corresponding action, walking, and results in my having the property of walking. But, then it seems to follow that befitting actions mentioned in impulsive impressions cannot be *huparchonta*. Namely, according to Chrysippus,

only those predicates that are attributes are said to belong, for instance, “to walk” belongs to me when I am walking, but it does not belong to me when I am lying down or sitting.⁶¹

In other words, some predicate “belongs” to me (*huparchei moi*), i.e. refers to something existent, only when it is my actual attribute (*sumbebēkos*), i.e. when it is indeed a property of my body. Because of this, the predicate “to walk” (*peripatein*) belongs to me only when I am actually walking, that is, when “I am walking (*peripatō*)” corresponds to the reality. During the time when I am not walking, the predicate “to walk” is not something that *huparchei moi*, i.e. something that belongs to me. Accordingly, the predicate “to walk” in the impulsive impression “it befits me to walk (*kathēkei moi peripatein*)” cannot *huparchei moi* unless walking is one of my attributes, that is, unless I am actually walking. However, according to the Stoic theory of impulse, my walking is initiated only at the moment I assent to the impulsive impression “it befits me to walk”, which is when walking becomes my attribute and thus something that *huparchei moi*. But, at the time I am entertaining the impression and before I assent to it, walking is not one of my attributes and, therefore, not something *huparchon* for me. Because of this, it seems that no impulsive impression “it befits me to *K*” can be caused by something *huparchon*, since the action *K* is the effect of my assent to the impulsive impression, i.e. because *K* becomes something *huparchon* only after I assent to the impulsive impression.⁶² But, if

61 Stob. 1.106,20–23 = LS 51B4: *katēgorēmata huparchein legetai mona ta sumbebēkota, hoion to peripatein huparchei moi hote peripatō, hote de katakeklimai ē kathēmai ouch huparchei*. Notice that I have followed Long & Sedley in translating *huparchein* here as “belongs” because using the translation “exists”, which I have used in section I above, would sound very awkward in English; cf. n. 6 above.

62 This problem remains even if *huparchein* here is understood in the sense that applies to incorporeal propositions or facts, in which it means “to be true” or “to be the case” (for this sense of *huparchein*, see Long, “Language and Thought in Stoicism”, 91). Before my impulse to walk occurs, it is not yet true or the case that I am walking; “I am walking” becomes the case only after I assent to the impulsive impression “it befits me to walk”. That is why the solution proposed by Brennan (*The Stoic Life*, 78–79) to the problem of apprehensive impressions caused by other impressions does not apply to the impulsive impressions. Even if we grant that some apprehensive impressions could be caused by incorporeal sayables that are

impulsive impressions cannot be caused by *huparchonta*, then it seems that, as we have seen in section I, they cannot meet the Causal Requirement and that they cannot be apprehensive.

One obvious problem of this result is that the claim that impulsive impressions cannot be apprehensive seems to imply that the practical perfection of the Sage is based on nonapprehensive impressions, or in other words, that there is nothing to distinguish morally perfect actions of the Sage from morally imperfect actions of the non-Sage. But this conclusion need not follow. Namely, we have seen at the end of section III above that the Stoics thought that it is possible to construct universalized impressions, which cannot be apprehensive, from sets of impressions about particulars, which can be apprehensive. Accordingly, from a set of impressions that evaluate someone's walking in a particular practical context, for example "Dion's walking is befitting in the practical context C", "Theon's walking is befitting in C", etc., the agent could form a universalized impression "walking is befitting in C" or "it befits to walk in C";⁶³ and then, when in circumstances sufficiently similar to C, the agent could deduce the impulsive impression "it befits me to walk now". Examples of such universalized impressions about *kathēkonta* are abundant in our sources; in fact, various lists of befitting actions that we find in preserved accounts of Stoic ethics seem to consist precisely of such universalized propositions. For example, Diogenes Laertius says that (in most contexts) honoring parents, brother, and the fatherland is befitting, that spending time with friends is befitting, while neglecting parents is not befitting, and so on (DL 7.108–109 = LS 59E.). Thus, even if impulsive impressions cannot be apprehensive, they can be deduced from the agent's knowledge of universal facts about which actions are befitting, which was in turn based on the apprehension of particular befitting actions of other agents. Obviously, if the agent is a non-Sage, at least some of his impulsive impressions would be deduced from false universal moral impressions, i.e. those that are based on nonapprehensive moral impressions about particulars. Therefore, it does not follow that, if impulsive impressions are incapable of being apprehensive, there would be nothing to distinguish between the morally

huparchonta in the sense of "being true" or "being the case" (which is, as noted in Striker, "Κριτήριον τῆς ἀληθείας", 73–76, by no means uncontroversial), an impulsive impression of the form *kathēkei moi K* by definition cannot be caused by such *huparchonta*, because *K* in the impulsive impression is not true (or the case) before the agent assents to the impulsive impression.

63 I take it that the Stoics thought that impressions such as "walking is befitting" and "it befits to walk" are interchangeable, i.e. that they differ only in syntax; in the former, the evaluative element "is befitting" is expressed as a participle (*kathekon*) and the action as the corresponding noun (*peripatēsis*), while in the latter the action is expressed in the form of infinitive (*peripatein*) and the evaluative element "it befits" in its verbal form (*kathēkei*).

perfect actions of the Sage and the morally imperfect actions of the non-Sage. On the contrary, they would be distinguished by the fact that the former's actions would be based on knowledge about moral objects, i.e. on a set of assents to apprehensive moral/evaluative impressions about moral particulars, while the latter's actions would be based on a set of impressions which would contain at least some nonapprehensive moral/evaluative impressions about particulars.

vi.

In sections II and III above, I have argued that Epictetus thought that certain moral impressions are capable of being apprehensive, and that these impressions, as perceptual impressions about particular corporeal objects, would have been capable of meeting the Causal Requirement described in section I. In section IV, we have suggested that the Stoics thought that moral impressions are both descriptions and evaluations, and in section V that there are no obstacles in assuming that certain evaluative impressions that are relevant for action can also be apprehensive, although impulsive impressions themselves cannot be apprehensive. What remains to be discussed, however, is whether there are moral/evaluative impressions that could meet the other two requirements necessary for apprehension.

Let us start with the Accordance Requirement. In the case of the nonmoral impression, this requirement is met if and only if the predicates contained in the impression correspond to the properties that indeed belong to the impressor. By analogy, it is natural to assume that in the case of the moral/evaluative impression the Accordance Requirement is met if and only if moral predicates contained in the impression correspond to moral corporeal properties of the impressor.

It seems, however, that the picture is more complicated than this. As we have seen in section IV above, moral impressions are descriptions not only of their impressors, but also of their evaluations. The meanings of evaluative predicates indicate a certain type of pursuit or evasion stance, and this must be taken into account when considering how moral impressions meet the Accordance Requirement. One way of doing this would be to assume that just as a nonmoral impression is in accordance with its impressor when the nonmoral predicates contained in it correspond to the nonmoral properties of the impressor, a moral/evaluative impression is in accordance with its impressor when the moral/evaluative predicates contained in it also indicate a correct stance towards the impressor. Because of their evaluative role, it seems that the chief criterion of success for a moral/evaluative impression should not be its being true as in the case of purely descriptive impressions, but primarily its correctness as an evaluation. Therefore, in order to meet the Accordance Requirement, it is crucial that the moral/evaluative impression is above all a correct evaluation of its object, which means that it associates the correct agent's stance to its object.

How is this association of correct stances to objects supposed to work? In order to see this, we have to understand how the Stoics classified evaluable objects and possible evaluative stances the agent can take towards them. On the one hand, they distinguished between four types of evaluable impressors classified in two general categories. In the first category they placed two general classes of things that are morally relevant, which they called goods (*agatha*) and bads (*kaka*), and in the second two general classes of things that are morally indifferent but practically relevant, which they called preferred indifferents (*proëgmena adiaphora*) and dispreferred indifferents (*apoproëgmena adiaphora*).⁶⁴ Unlike good and bad things, morally indifferent things are those that in themselves neither benefit nor harm because they can be used both well and badly, depending on the context.⁶⁵ Those indifferents that are in accordance with our nature,⁶⁶ like health, pleasure, wealth, etc. have value (*axia*) and are thus preferred, while those that are not in accordance with our nature, like illness, pain, poverty, etc. have disvalue (*apaxia*) and are thus dispreferred.⁶⁷ In virtue of having value or disvalue, indifferents too are capable of stimulating action.

On the other hand, the Stoics thought that each of these four types of objects has a stance that is appropriately associated with it. We have already mentioned these four stances in section IV above: goods are worth choosing, bads are worth avoiding, preferred indifferents are worth taking, and dispreferred indifferents are worth not taking. Evaluating objects by associating correct stances to them was important for the Stoics because they thought that different stances involve different kinds of impulse. Although goods and preferred

64 The distinction between good and bad things on the one hand and preferred and dispreferred indifferents on the other originated with Zeno (see Stob. 2.57,18–20 = IG 102.5a and 2.84,18–24 = LS 58E1–2 = IG 102.7g). Despite dissenting views from some of the members, such as Aristo (see e.g. *SE M* 11.64–67 = LS 58F and commentary on LS 1.358–359), it remained the orthodox doctrine of the Stoic school. Nevertheless, Aristo's arguments could have been the motivation for Chrysippus to acknowledge the usage of *agathon* and *kakon* in the loose sense of these words; see below.

65 DL 7.103 = LS 58A5–6. For example, a preferred indifferent like wealth can be used in a vicious way; also, it is sometimes virtuous to give up your own life (a preferred indifferent) for your country or friends, or if suffering from an incurable disease (DL 7.130 = LS 66H).

66 See Stob. 2.79,18–80,13 = LS 58C1–3 = IG 102.7a; cf. DL 7.102–103 = LS 58A4 for a list of indifferents.

67 Stob. 2.83,10–11 = LS 58D1 = IG 102.7f. The difference in terms of value between goods and bads on the one hand and indifferents on the other is that goods and bads have absolute value and disvalue, while indifferents have relative value and disvalue (Stob. 2.84,18–85,11 = LS 58E = IG 102.7g).

indifferents both stimulate the same general pursuit-type behavior, they thought that preferred indifferents are pursued conditionally because they stimulate conditional impulse towards them,⁶⁸ while goods are pursued unconditionally because they stimulate unconditional impulse towards them. Analogously, bads stimulate unconditional impulse away from them, while dispreferred indifferents stimulate conditional impulse away from them. Therefore, it could be said that a moral/evaluative impression meets the Accordance Requirement if and only if it associates choosing with a good object, avoiding with a bad object, taking with an object that is a preferred indifferent, or not taking with an object that is a dispreferred indifferent, and *eo ipso* correctly stimulates an unconditional impulse towards a good object, an unconditional impulse away from a bad object, a conditional impulse towards a preferred indifferent, or a conditional impulse away from a dispreferred indifferent.

If this is correct, however, then it follows that meeting the Causal and the Accordance Requirements is sufficient to make a moral/evaluative impression apprehensive. Namely, we have seen in section I above that the hallmark of the apprehensive impression is that it is not merely actually true, but such that it could not turn out false, and that meeting the Discrimination Requirement is supposed to secure this. In the case of nonmoral descriptive apprehensive impressions, the Discrimination Requirement is met by the apprehensive impression's ability to capture the ontological uniqueness of its object, which prevents the possibility of mistaking that object for another extremely similar but distinct object. In the case of moral/evaluative impressions, however, conditions for securing that an impression could not turn out incorrect seem to be different. In fact, they seem to be already sufficiently satisfied by meeting the strong version of the Accordance Requirement that we have described in the previous paragraph. A moral/evaluative impression that correctly associates the appropriate stance to the object is arguably already not only a correct evaluation, but also an evaluation that could not turn out incorrect. For example, the impression "Dion's prudence is a good thing" is not only a correct evaluation of Dion's prudence insofar as it indicates that prudence is worth choosing for Dion, but also an evaluation that could not turn out incorrect because, according to the Stoics, as a good object prudence is always worth choosing since it is a proper object of unconditional impulse.

Did Epictetus and his Stoic predecessors think that meeting the Causal and the Accordance Requirements is sufficient to make a moral/evaluative impression apprehensive? It is quite possible. Such a view would be consistent with the view that the Stoics originally thought that an impression that meets the first two requirements—i.e. an impression that is caused by something existent and is in accordance with that existent thing—is already apprehensive. On this view, the Stoics added the Discrimination Requirement

68 Cf. Stob. 2.75,1–3 = IG 102.5o.

to the definition of the apprehensive impression only as a further explication of the Accordance Requirement in response to the pressure from the Academics to eliminate the possibility of confusing two extremely similar but distinct objects.⁶⁹ Therefore, it is possible that the Stoics thought that the addition of the Discrimination Requirement was necessary only in the case of purely descriptive apprehensive impressions because only they were susceptible to the Academics' counterexamples requiring discrimination between extremely similar objects.

On the other hand, I think that there is some reason to reject the assumption that meeting the Causal and the Accordance Requirements is sufficient to make a moral/evaluative impression apprehensive. Namely, Plutarch reports that Chrysippus wrote the following in his book *On good things*:

If someone in accordance with such differences [i.e. between the preferred and dispreferred] wishes to call the one class of them good and the other bad, and he is referring to these things [i.e. the preferred or the dispreferred] and not committing an idle aberration, his usage must be accepted on the grounds that he is not wrong on the matter of meanings [*sēmainomenois*] and in other respects is aiming at the normal use of terms.⁷⁰

The text here suggests that Chrysippus thought that those who apply the concept "good" to preferred indifferents and the concept "bad" to dispreferred indifferents are not completely mistaken, and that their language usage does not involve a mistake in "the matter of meanings". However, we saw above that the Stoics distinguished sharply between things that are genuinely good and bad and things that are only preferred and dispreferred indifferents, as well as between stances that should be appropriately associated with them. So, what could Chrysippus have meant by saying that calling preferred indifferents good and dispreferred indifferents bad is not an error but something consistent with the meanings of these respective pairs of terms? It seems that Chrysippus is referring here to a potential agent's stances, which, as we have argued in section IV above, constitute parts of the meaning of moral/evaluative predicates.

69 See, for example, Frede, "Stoic Epistemology", 302–311. The chief textual evidence that suggests this interpretation is Cic. *Acad.* 2.77 = LS 40D4–7.

70 *St. rep.* 1048A, transl. by LS, 58H. Although the text has been the subject of many proposals for editorial emendations (cf. Cherniss, *Plutarch: Moralia* XIII: II, 530, ns. 10–18), it is reasonably clear that Chrysippus here states that, although this is not strictly speaking correct according to the Stoic doctrine, those who apply "good" (*agathon*) and "bad" (*kakon*) to preferred and dispreferred indifferents do not err in respect to the meanings of these moral concepts and are in general following the loose, everyday linguistic sense of these terms.

Indeed, there is a connection between goods and preferred indifferents, as well as between bads and dispreferred indifferents in respect to stances: goods and preferred indifferents are properly associated with a general pursuit-type of behavior (choosing and taking), while bads and dispreferred indifferents are associated with a general evasion-type behavior (avoiding and not taking). After all, this connection is not surprising given the fact that the Stoics thought that our conception of the good develops through analogy from our conception of the valuable, i.e. from our conception of the preferred indifferents.⁷¹ Because of this, it is possible that Chrysippus was trying to say that those who evaluate preferred indifferents as good and dispreferred indifferents as bad will not be completely wrong in respect to what *kind* of general behavior they associate with evaluated objects.⁷² For example, someone who assents to the impression “My health is something good” would be evaluating his own health as something that should be pursued, and this evaluation would be correct in most cases because even the Stoics thought that, although not a genuine good, health is an indifferent that is preferred, i.e. something that is generally in accordance with our nature and, as such, has a significant amount of (non-absolute) value.⁷³

If our interpretation of what Chrysippus had in mind above is correct, then (at least some of) the Stoics would have been inclined to understand the Accordance Requirement as a considerably weaker condition than the one we discussed a couple of paragraphs above. Instead of ensuring that each of the four

71 Cic. *Fin.* 3.20–21 = LS 59D2–4; 3.33 = LS 60D1–2; cf. Jackson-McCabe, “The Stoic Theory of Implanted Preconceptions”, 334–339.

72 It remains unclear what Chrysippus’s position would be on the truth-value of moral impressions that evaluate a preferred indifferent as something good or a dispreferred indifferent as something bad. Namely, if moral impressions have dual descriptive-evaluative function, then it seems that as descriptions, such impressions would be false. There is, perhaps, one way to avoid this conclusion. Arguably, moral concepts of an agent entertaining such impressions have not yet reached the level of development where they can track the Stoic distinction between genuine goods and bads, and preferred and dispreferred indifferents. Accordingly, when such an agent entertains an impression that some preferred indifferent impressor is good, perhaps his conception of good does correctly capture a corporeal element in the impressor that is in fact shared both by objects that are preferred indifferents and objects that are genuinely good. If so, then it seems that this agent’s impression would be a true description after all. In any case, one could still say that, at least in most cases, such impressions are “in accordance with the impressor” in a substantial sense of this phrase.

73 The same account could be given for evaluating dispreferred indifferents as something bad: “My illness is something bad” would be evaluating my illness as something that I should generally try to evade, which would in most cases be a correct evaluation.

types of evaluable objects (goods, bads, preferred and dispreferred indifferents) is associated with exactly one of the possible agent's stances (choosing, avoiding, taking and not taking), this weaker version of the Accordance Requirement would be satisfied by simply assigning the correct kind of general behavior (pursuit or evasion) to objects belonging to one of the two general groups of evaluable impressors (goods and preferred indifferents, or bads and dispreferred indifferents). It should immediately be clear that meeting this weaker Accordance Requirement would not be sufficient to make a moral/evaluative impression apprehensive. Although the agent assenting to impressions that meet only the Causal and the weak version of the Accordance Requirements would have evaluations that are in most situations, and perhaps even in all actual situations, correct, his evaluations would not be such that they could not turn out incorrect. There would still be (actual or possible) situations in which such an agent's evaluations could turn out incorrect. For example, someone who assents to the impression "My health is something good" and is hence evaluating his health is an object of general pursuit-type behavior, in most cases may be actually correct in his evaluation of health because in most cases health should properly be pursued. In fact, if he never actually encounters a situation in which it would be befitting for him to harm himself,⁷⁴ this agent may even spend his whole life pursuing health and remain correct in his original evaluation.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, his original evaluation of health would not be such that it could not turn out incorrect, because had the agent been in a situation in which it would have been befitting for him to give up his health, he would not have done it. His impression

74 One example of such a situation is that, when the Sage is called to serve the interests of a tyrant, he would rather choose sickness than health in order to avoid the service, SE *M* 11.66 = LS 58F4. From another place talking about the Sage's suicide (Stob. 2.110, 9–10 = IG 102.11m), it is clear that in such situations actions that are contrary to what is normally a preferred indifferent are considered befitting (*kathēkon*) by the Sage.

75 Indeed, it seems that the "moral progressor" (*prokoptōn*), a non-Sage who has progressed to the furthest point short of becoming the Sage, mentioned by Chrysippus in Stob. 5.906, 18–907, 5 (= LS 59I) is precisely such an agent—a person whose all moral/evaluative impressions he has assented to so far have actually turned out correct, but at least some of these impressions are nevertheless nonapprehensive. As Chrysippus says, even though all of this person's actual actions are based on correct evaluations (because they are all befitting), he has not yet achieved happiness and wisdom because his actions have not yet acquired firmness and fixity that characterizes the actions of the Sage. I take this to mean that regardless of the fact that this person *actually* acts correctly, at least some of his actions are based on moral impressions that *could* turn out to be incorrect evaluations. That is why his actions have not yet achieved the firmness and fixity of the Sage's actions.

“My health is something good” would evaluate his health as something worth choosing, and since choosing is a stance that involves unconditional impulse, it would have prevented him from giving up his health in this situation.⁷⁶ In other words, a moral/evaluative impression that meets the Causal and the Weak Accordance Requirements would not enable the agent to discriminate between actual situations in which his evaluation is correct and counterfactual situations in which his evaluation would have been incorrect, and the ability to make such discriminations is, as we have seen, crucial for making a moral/evaluative impression apprehensive.⁷⁷

Therefore, in order to be apprehensive, a moral/evaluative impression would have to meet an additional requirement, which would be parallel to the third requirement from section I above. The role of this additional requirement that would serve as the Discrimination Requirement for the moral/evaluative apprehensive impression would be to ensure that the agent’s evaluation of the object is not only correct, but such that it could not turn out incorrect. From our discussion so far, it should be clear that the Discrimination Requirement would be met through correct association of stances that involve conditional and unconditional impulses to corresponding evaluable objects. More precisely, a moral/evaluative impression that meets this requirement would be the impression that correctly associates stances involving unconditional impulse with genuine good and bad objects, and stances involving conditional impulse to preferred and dispreferred indifferents. Defined in this way, the Discrimination Requirement in conjunction with the weak version of the Accordance Requirement described above now seems to be able to ensure that the impression meeting it is an evaluation that is not only correct, but such that it could not turn out incorrect. The way in which the Accordance

76 In explaining the difference between the moral disposition of the Sage and the non-Sage, the preserved texts suggest that the Stoics invested more effort in focusing on the cases of mistaking preferred indifferents for genuine goods than on, for example, mistaking genuine goods for preferred indifferents (see, for example, DL 7.101–103 = LS 58A; SE *M* 11.200–201 = LS 59G). This is to be expected, because most ordinary people as well as non-Stoic philosophers consider moral indifferents to be genuine goods or bads. After all, even the Stoics themselves believed, as we have seen above, that the conception of relative value of things that they classified as preferred indifferents is developmentally prior to the conception of the genuine good. I do not think, however, that this means that their approach to analyzing evaluations that mistake genuine goods and bads for objects of conditional impulse would have been any different.

77 Here I agree with Brennan (*The Stoic Life*, 178) and his emphasis on the importance of the correctness of evaluations in not only actual, but counterfactual situations as well for the moral and practical perfection of the Sage and his distinction from the non-Sage.

and the Discrimination Requirements work together to make a moral/evaluative impression apprehensive could be represented by the following table:

		Accordance Requirement	
		General Pursuit Behavior	General Evasion Behavior
Discrimination Requirement	Unconditional Impulse	Choosing (Goods)	Avoiding (Bads)
	Conditional Impulse	Taking (Preferred Indifferents)	Not Taking (Dispreferred Indifferents)

We are now finally ready to attempt to formulate a definition of the moral/evaluative apprehensive impression; it would state that a moral/evaluative impression is apprehensive if and only if it meets the following three requirements:

- (1) The Causal Requirement: the impression must be caused by an impressor that is existent;
- (2) The Accordance Requirement: the impression has to be in accordance with the impressor that caused it; this means that the moral/evaluative predicates contained in the impression must evaluate the impressor by correctly associating a general pursuit-type (choosing or taking) or a general evasion-type (avoidance or not taking) stance with the impressor;
- (3) The Discrimination Requirement: the impression must be such that it enables the agent to discriminate between actual situations in which the impression is a correct evaluation of the impressor and possible counterfactual situations in which the impression would be an incorrect evaluation of the impressor; this means that the moral/evaluative predicates contained in the impression must correctly associate unconditional or conditional impulse with the impressor (unconditional to goods and bads, conditional to preferred and dispreferred indifferents).

As we can see from the definition, the mechanisms enabling nonmoral and moral impressions to meet the Discrimination Requirement, although different, nevertheless both rely on some kind of special discriminatory power that characterizes the apprehensive impressions. In the case of the non-moral apprehensive impression, this mechanism, as we have seen in section I above, relies on the ability of the impression to discriminate between extremely similar but distinct impressors because confusing such objects is the chief obstacle to achieving nonmoral apprehension. In the case of moral/evaluative apprehensive impressions, this mechanism relies on the ability of the impression to discriminate between genuine goods and preferred indifferents, or genuine bads and dispreferred indifferents because confusing these impressors is the chief obstacle to achieving moral apprehension. However, in both cases, the person who assents only to true impressions that distinguish between extremely similar but distinct objects and correct evaluations that distinguish between genuinely morally relevant objects and indifferents will be capable of achieving epistemic, moral, and practical perfection worthy of a Stoic Sage.⁷⁸

78 Of course, just as in the case of descriptive apprehensive impressions and knowledge, entertaining apprehensive moral/evaluative impressions is only a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving moral and practical perfection. In addition, the agent needs to achieve the state in which he assents only to moral/evaluative impressions that are apprehensive, and never to moral/evaluative impressions that are nonapprehensive.

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