Galen and the Stoic “double perversion” theory

**Abstract.** Galen argues that the Stoic view that children are immediately familiar with what is good is false. Chrysippus holds that when a person acts badly, this is so because her nature has been perverted, and that the cause of perversion (διαστροφή) is twofold: the influence of the companions and what derives “from the very nature of things”. Children, Galen contends, without any instruction rush towards pleasure and avoid pain. Additionally, they get angry, which proves that the first natural thing is not a propensity to good, but to emotions. However, Galen grants that, although at the beginning children are familiar with pleasure and victory, when they grow up, they have a natural familiarization with the good. In this paper I argue that the Stoics have a reasonable way of replying Galen’s objection: since he admits that when a human being develops his or her rationality, a familiarization with the good appears (such familiarization to the good being something natural), he is implicitly granting that the inclination to the good is part of human nature. In my discussion I briefly deal with the first orientation of the human animal towards himself, and suggest that this is the first good; in fact, for animals the appropriate thing to do is to pursue the primary natural goods that guarantee the preservation of their own constitution. That initial good is not a moral good yet, but it is a necessary condition for the correct development of the person, which will foster the correct development of one’s inclination towards what is appropriate in a moral sense.

**§1 Introduction: how good humans are by nature?**

Galen argues that it is not true that children have no natural inclination to pleasure and avoidance of pain.[[1]](#footnote-1) He also notes that it is Chrysippus himself who points out that, even when a child has never seen or heard an example of vice, he/she will, however, not necessarily philosophize. What the Stoics are intent on endorsing is that humans have from nature inclinations (ἀφορμαί) towards virtue[[2]](#footnote-2) and to stabilize their impulses.[[3]](#footnote-3) This being so, if a person acts badly, it is because his/her nature is already corrupted, and thus the question is which is the cause of such corruption and thereby of his/her perversion.[[4]](#footnote-4)

According to Chrysippus (as witnessed by Galen), the cause of perversion (διαστροφή) is twofold: the first is due to “the influence of the majority of people”; the second arises “from the very nature of things”,[[5]](#footnote-5) a somehow vague expression that Galen rephrases later as “the persuasiveness of impressions” (τὴν πιθανότητα τῶν φαντασιῶν; *PHP* V 5, 320, 17-18). This fits with the account furnished by Diogenes Laertius, who reports that the Stoics maintained that the rational animal at times is perverted (διαστρέφεσθαι) by the persuasiveness of exterior activities or by the influence of companions (this is so because “the starting-points provided by nature are uncorrupted”; ἀδιαστρόφους; Diogenes Laertius [DL] VII 89, transl. Inwood & Gerson. See also Cicero, *Fin.* III 22-23). But Galen, faithful to his controversial aims and based on his Platonic psychology of conflicting parts,[[6]](#footnote-6) intends to show that, since Chrysippus only focused on the best part of the soul (i.e., τὸ λογιστικόν), he is unable to explain the origin of vice. Additionally, Galen objects to Chrysippus that if children are immediately familiar from the beginning (εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ᾠκείωται) with what is good, vice could not arise from themselves, but should only come from without (*PHP* 318, 20-30). Moreover, it cannot be said that children’s impulses are governed by reason for they do not have reason yet (*PHP* 316, 24-25).

At least part of these objections is based on a psychology of parts in conflict that is rejected by Chrysippus (not by Posidonius, who endorses a psychology of conflicting parts of the soul, an additional reason Galen uses to suggest that Posidonius’ psychology is the correct one).[[7]](#footnote-7) At any rate, of particular interest is the fact that Galen challenges the Stoic thesis of familiarization (οἰκείωσις), according to which (i) the first impulse of the animal is not pleasure, but self-preservation and (ii) that there is a natural orientation towards good. Galen denies (i) because children, without any instruction, rush towards pleasure and avoid pain. Within the framework of his argument, the restriction ἀδιδάκτως is relevant since, in case there was instruction, one could argue that this inclination to pleasure is due to that, not to nature. But the fact is, Galen maintains, that there is no “didactic training” which is responsible for that orientation towards pleasure.

He insists that thesis (ii) should also be avoided because in fact children get angry, proving that the first impulse (DL VII 85; πρώτη ὁρμή) is not a propensity to good, but to passionate states (a detail that is recorded not only in children but also in irrational animals).[[8]](#footnote-8) However, Galen grants that, although at first children are familiar with pleasure and victory, on reaching maturity, they have a certain *natural* familiarization (τινὰ φυσικὴν οἰκείωσιν) with the good (καλόν). Now young children are rational, even though they are not rational yet in the sense that they can use their reason properly. Moreover, if at the beginning of a newborn’s life the leading part of its soul is like a sheet of paper ready for being written upon,[[9]](#footnote-9) one should assume that newborns have no concepts of what is good or bad yet, thus their souls cannot be perverted.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the issues treated by this paper. The central problem is the development of character. As suggested by C. Gill, a good starting-point is Cicero, who states that the first appropriate act (*officium*) is the animal’s self-preservation in its natural constitution; the second is that the animal retains those things that are according to nature and rejects those that are contrary to nature (Cicero *Fin.* III 20 and V 24). This process is described as a sort of necessary condition to grasp what is good: once this natural procedure of selection and rejection has been discovered, what can be truly called “good” appears to the agent. This process depicts “an ideal pattern of development,” which can culminate in virtue (but a succesful culmination of this process requires the presence of a developed rationality).[[10]](#footnote-10) The development of one’s character can be analyzed according to different levels; the first is that of “primary natural things,” objects towards which animals are instictively attracted in the initial stage of their development. This being so, one should assume that the goodness a human being is inclined to by nature is its own self-preservation (or so I shall argue). Pursuing the primary natural things is an appropriate act, which, if pursued them rationally, describes what is approriate for the human constitution.[[11]](#footnote-11) It is true that at the outset of the human animal’s life the orientation to its constitution (understood as a sense of appropriation of what allows oneself to function correctly) and the preference for those things that permit self preservation are good for that alone.[[12]](#footnote-12) Nevertheless, that basic good can be considered a necessary condition for the correct development of the person, which will foster the correct development of our inclination towards what is approriate in a moral sense. In *Fin.* V 43 Cicero argues that nature has generated the *vis hominis* to enable us to acquire any virtue, which explains why young children without instruction are stirred by resemblances of the virtues, which contain within themselves “the seeds of virtues”.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Graver, for her part, has provided a detailed reconstruction of the whole process of character formation according to the Stoics. First, she contends, one’s character and behavior are not caused by forces beyond one’s control. We are responsible for forming the beliefs and habits we have, but again, one might suspect that this is possible once one’s reason has been developed or during the very process of developing one’s rationality. According to Graver, “Stoic providentialism asserts that the mind is geared towards the acquisition of correct knowledge throughout one’s life.”[[14]](#footnote-14) But as she clarifies, we are not born with knowledge, although we have innate tendencies which give us some guidance to a correct intellectual development; the kind of innatism related to these inclinations, I hold, should be understood as a dispositional innateness (i.e. the innate capacity to correctly develop one’s character in the direction of knowledge rather than of error).[[15]](#footnote-15) Despite providence’s beneficent plan, Graver underlines, we acquire many erroneous beliefs. In that process, “the persuasiveness of impressions” play a decisive role, although the most interesting point in Graver’s argument is the emphasis she places upon the fact that the native tendencies must be very closely allied with the points of view of nature.[[16]](#footnote-16)

In this article I argue that the Stoics have a reasonable way of replying Galen’s objection: since Galen admits that when a human being develops his/her rationality, a familiarization to the good appears (such familiarization to the good being something natural), he is implicitly granting that the inclination to good is part of human nature. In fact, as soon as we are born, the Stoics claim, we are familiarized with what is naturally good for us and alienated from what is naturally bad.[[17]](#footnote-17) The prescriptions that come from reason are part of human nature, and it is thanks to those prescriptions that a human being can recognize errors, vindicate virtues and carry out actions in accordance with these virtues. I shall briefly treat the first orientation of the human animal towards self-preservation –which at the beginning of its life can be understood as a selfish feeling, but later it can become an “altruistic” feeling that is directed not only at one’s interest but also at the interest of the others. While discussing the issue of animal’s attachment to itself, I will suggest that this is the first good (both for human and non-human animals); for animals the appropriate path is to pursue primary natural goods that guarantee the preservation of their own constitution. As stated above, even though self-preservation can be taken to be the first good to which a newborn is inclined, that initial good is not a moral good yet, though it is a necessary condition for the correct development of the person, which will foster the correct development of our inclination towards what is appropriate in a moral sense.

Later, I will also succinctly deal with the probable role of the Stoic cognitive impression (the criterion of truth) and its probable role in the practical domain. Nature has provided us with clear and distinct impressions (the cognitive impressions) which by their very nature cannot be false; thus, one might see them as relevant for identifying what is truly good. In fact, from the very moment of its birth a newborn is endowed with perception (allowing it to be aware both of itself and of external things). But in the case of human beings their perception also provides a conduit for concepts (see n.9 above). According to the Stoic account (Aëtius, IV 12, 1-5), the “impressor” (φανταστόν; *i.e*., an extra-mental object) causes an impression (φαντασία) on one’s soul, and one of these impressions can be cognitive. However, if a cognitive impression is one that cannot be false and the person relates to the world through her perceptions and impressions, cognitive impressions (those that by their very nature are *always* true) should play a role to guarantee a good life; in such a life, apprehending what is truly good is decisive.[[18]](#footnote-18)

At this point the mid-secondary century AD Stoic Hierocles can be helpful; he is particularly interested in showing that we are constantly self-perceiving, even in sleep (*Elementa Ethica* [*El. Eth*.] V 20). Any animal has an impression of itself (*El. Eth*. V 20-25); to some extent following a Stoic orthodox view (apparently related to DL VII 85-86), Hierocles states that when the animal has received the first perception (αἴσθησις) of itself, it immediately becomes familiar with itself (ᾠκειώθη πρὸς ἑαυτῷ) and its constitution (VI 50). So, he can be suggesting that nature is cunning at instilling even in such animals a powerful love for themselves, because their survival would otherwise be impossible. For this reason even newborn infants do not readily tolerate being enclosed in dark rooms, for if they are unable to hear or see anything, “they receive an impression of their own destruction” (φαντασία ἀναιρέσεως αὑτῶν), and it turns out to be intolerable (actually, they seem to be experiencing an emotional state: fear, anguish, or likewise). Thus, Hierocles appears to be suggesting that when newborn infants receive impressions, they assent to them; otherwise, they could not experience different emotional states. Then again, the issue here is that young children (like irrational animals) do not have beliefs, so one could suspect that they are not influenced by false beliefs and are incapable of *rational* assent yet. But Stoic emotions are supposed to depend on rational assent.

The paper proceeds thus: in the next section (**§2**) I contrast the Epicurean and Stoic view regarding what the newborn animal’s object of desire is and emphasize the Stoic arguments against pleasure as that to which the just born animal is oriented. At this point I return to Galen’s evaluation of the Stoics and show that he endorses the Epicurean view. In treating this, I present the Stoic arguments against Epicureanism as reported by Cicero, Seneca, and Diogenes Laertius to explain the sense in which I take self-preservation to be the first good toward which the human animal is directed. Next (**§3**), I examine the assumingly unperverted nature of the newborn before it is corrupted, and insist that the fact that the knowledge the human animal has of what is good in its first stages, even being a certain kind of knowledge, cannot qualify as a “real good” in the sense of what is morally good. I also attempt to make plausible the idea that the animal’s good in terms of what is convenient for its preservation and the good in a moral sense are somehow related. In **§4** I concentrate on Hiercoles and suggest that the issue of nature’s corruption can be analyzed from the perspective of the theory of assent and of emotions. Hierocles is particularly concerned with the issue of the animal’s self-awareness, and the relevant aspect of this detail, I claim, lies in the fact that self-recognition not only makes it possible to know one’s parts and their function, but also to know that one has a mind. This recognition opens a new dimension in the process of self-development and character formation and hence of rationality formation as well. Finally, in **§5** I explain the issue of the “persuasiveness of impressions” and provide some concluding remarks.

**§2 The Epicureans and the Stoics on newborn animals’ first object of desire**

Cicero famously reports that, according to the Epicureans, as soon as each animal is born, it seeks pleasure as the highest good (*ut summo bono*) and rejects pain as the greatest evil (*ut summum malum*). The animal does this while it is still uncorrupted (*ipsa natura incorrupte*) and sound. By contrast, the Stoics, probably bearing this Epicurean account in mind, argue that as soon as the animal is born, it strives for its self-preservation. Both Epicureans and Stoics think that at some point nature is perverted. The dramatic fact is that, for the most part, human beings live their lives having their nature perverted, since perversion of nature arrives very soon in a person’s life. The only animals who live their lives with their nature unperverted are irrational animals, for whom this presents no problem, as they have no practical life in the strict sense. What I mean is that they do not have the sort of life which is supposed to deal with what is bad and good. If a practical life is related to a life where what is bad and good is relevant, non-human animals do not qualify as a type of individual whose nature can be perverted or modified in evaluative terms *vis-a-vis* what is morally incorrect. The basic assumption (both for Epicureans and Stoics) is that nature in its origin always is good and it can be a sort of pattern for what is good and bad.

Turning now to the objection Galen presents against the Stoic tenet that children have no natural inclination to pleasure, he sides with the Epicureans (i.e., the animal, including the human animal, seeks pleasure and avoids pain). Casting doubt on the Stoic view, Galen implies that human nature is not naturally good, thus implicitly opposing the stance that one’s (still unperverted) nature cannot be a pattern of what is good or bad. The Stoic arguments against the Epicurean view that animals have a natural inclination to pleasure and avoidance of pain are well reported by Diogenes Laertius, Seneca, and Hierocles.[[19]](#footnote-19) DL VII 85 probably provides the most clear and complete argument, usually ascribed to Chrysippus; at this point, my hunch is that the other Stoics are drawing on Chrysippus’ argument (i.e. Musonius, Seneca, Hiercoles and Cicero when reporting the Stoic view). In what follows I will present those arguments and contrast them with Galen’s view.

The Platonic Eudoxus had already suggested before Epicurus that there is one thing, without question, that human beings and all other animals pursue: pleasure.[[20]](#footnote-20) Epicurus went even further because he tried to show that pleasure is the *only* natural end by arguing that newborns, who are still free from any destructive influence of their own nature, direct their first impulse at pleasure. Therefore, pleasure is not only a starting point, but also a final end.[[21]](#footnote-21) The Stoics, for their part, denied that the *first* natural impulse was towards pleasure, or that pleasure is the final end of human life; the primary impulse of the animal is towards its own self-preservation. [[22]](#footnote-22) Chrysippus’ argument runs thus:[[23]](#footnote-23) (*a*) the first thing familiar with oneself is the recognition both of one’s own constitution (σύστασις; i.e. physical constitution) and the awareness (συνείδησις) of it. Since nature familiarizes the animal with itself from the beginning of its life, its first impulse is directed towards its own preservation (ἐπὶ τὸ τηρεῖν ἑαυτό). (*b*) Then a teleological explanation is introduced: nature has produced the animal and could have made it (*b.1*) foreign to itself, (*b.2*) neither foreign to nor familiar with itself, or (*b.3*) familiar with itself. The alternatives (*b.1*) and (*b.2*) are dismissed; in fact, it is not plausible to think that nature, after having produced an animal, would not have provided it with the necessary means for its self-preservation. If so, one might wonder *for which sake* nature produced the animal. Amid the teleological argument positing nature as the cause of familiarization, the objection to the Epicurean thesis is introduced: (*c*) pleasure only appears once nature seeks and obtains what fits the constitution of the animal. This being so, pleasure is only a byproduct (ἐπιγέννημα)[[24]](#footnote-24) and presupposes first the familiarization of the living being to itself. The Stoics denied that the initial stage in the development of the animal was a natural impulse towards pleasure, because the tendency to self-preservation is prior to pleasure.

Both Cicero and Seneca offer two interesting arguments to show this: before feeling pleasure or pain the newborns (*parvi*) want what provides them a certain welfare and reject the opposite of that. However, this can only happen if, as a prior fact, the animal is able to appreciate its own condition and fear its destruction. But one cannot desire something unless one has self-awareness, from which it follows that self-awareness is prior to pleasure as the object towards which the animal is oriented (*Fin.* III 16-18, 20; *SVF* III 182, 189). It is not that the animal does not tend to pleasure at any time but feeling pleasure for something presupposes having a certain awareness (*sensus*) of oneself.

For his part, Seneca contends that all living beings have a perception of their own condition; that is obvious from the way animals move their limbs “neatly and nimbly just as if they were trained for this,” (transl. E. Fantham). No living being moves his own limbs with difficulty; thus given that all living creatures do this as soon as they are born, it should be inferred that they “arrive at the world” endowed with this knowledge (as if they are born trained). Some might object to this view that animals move their parts neatly because if they moved differently, they would feel pain. This being so, it is fear, not will, what moves them in the right way. Nevertheless, the Stoic takes this to be false, since actions performed by necessity are slow, but the agility demonstrated by animals comes from voluntary movement. Furthermore, animals strive to achieve their natural movement even when pain prevents them. Therefore, it is not fear that guides animal’s movement, but a sort of “implicit knowledge” that, even in a pre-intellectual sense, allows it to be aware of its parts and functions. It is not the fear of pain that drives the animal because, even when pain is presented as an impediment, the animal strives to develop its natural movement (*Ep.* 121, 5-8). This positively shows, Seneca concludes, that the animal is not primarily pleasure-oriented; in fact, it carries out actions that involve pain (such as the infant, trying to stand, falls and rises again and again while crying), but it is through pain that the infant manages to achieve a degree of training that discovers what its own nature demands of itself (standing). It is not true, therefore, that the animal is primarily oriented to pleasure from the beginning of its life: there are cases in which pain can constitute fitting training to perform what is naturally appropriate.

Clearly both Cicero and Seneca favor the priority of the animal’s interest for itself, not pleasure; both pleasure and pain stem from οἰκείωσις (understood both as a sort of self-preservation and self-recognition). Self-recognition logically seems to precede pleasure, since before recognizing one’s bodily self, one cannot know what it is that gratifies or pleases oneself. Hence pleasure cannot be the primary impulse of the living being because it is something derived and therefore a byproduct.

Such recognition surely starts with the awareness of one’s own constitution, which would facilitate control of one’s own parts. However, this awareness does not mean that the individual has a sort of intellectual understanding; when one objects to the Stoic view of how it is possible for a baby to understand such an intricate question, Seneca replies that what he argues is not that the newborn understands a definition of its constitution, thus even though the baby does not know *in conceptual terms* what its physical constitution is, he knows his constitution. Indeed, an individual can tend to what is good without being able to conceptualize the *notion* of good. It is a sort of pre-intellectual understanding, so to speak, that the animal has its members and knows their functions (*Ep*. 121, 10-12). [[25]](#footnote-25)

**§ 3 The movement from the unperverted to perverted nature**

If Seneca is to be trusted, in its first stages of development the human animal has a “certain kind of knowledge,” as it were, such “knowledge” being a cognizance of what is convenient or good for its own survival. As is clear, this good does not qualify as “moral good”. Against the Stoics (and in line with the Epicureans) Galen states that all children rush untaught into pleasures and flee from pains. In fact, he contends, they not only become angry, but they also kick and irritate, so young children have emotions and their first impulse is pleasure. [[26]](#footnote-26) For Galen such a thing happens also to non-human animals (such as quails, roosters, and “thousands of other animals”). This shows that children seem to be familiar both with pleasure and victory, and when they grow in age, they have anaturalfamiliarizationwith what is noble. Thus, Galen’s reasoning attempts to make clear that familiarization, even being a natural phenomenon, is posterior to the natural inclination of the newborn to pleasure. As Galen wisely points out, it is true that as children get older, they carry out many actions in accordance with their *concepts* of those virtues (κατὰ *τὰς* τῶν ἀρετῶν τούτων *ἐννοίας*). When they were young children, though, they lived immersed in their emotional states, without worrying about the prescriptions that came from reason.

A Stoic, I claim, would have a reasonable reply to Galen’s reasoning: **(i)** Chrysippus and Seneca (and of course the argument deployed by Cicero too) would employ the argument they indeed used to neutralize the view that the animal’s first impulse is aimed at pleasure (it is interesting to note that Galen keeps silent regarding those argumentative devices); **(ii)** if Galen acknowledges that familiarization is a natural phenomenon, he also should somehow recognize that the inclination to good is natural in a human being. Of course, Galen is very careful to avoid associating familiarization with the issue of self-preservation, which is the core of the Stoic argument in the already commented-on passages by Diogenes Laertius (reporting Chrysippus’ view), Cicero and Seneca. But if he accepts that humans can have a *natural* familiarization with what is noble, he needs to explain why this appears when reason manifests itself, not when reason is just a capacity that needs to be activated. Galen can reply that this cannot take place before reason is developed because without rationality there cannot be a concept of just or good. Even admitting this objection, a Stoic, notwithstanding, could say that for the animal to be familiar with itself (that is, for familiarization to take place in the basic, though no less important, sense of self-recognition) it is not necessary to be in possession of developed reason. In fact, this is an important detail in Seneca’s argument. The usual objection, Seneca recalls, is that an infant cannot comprehend this complicated matter, and if it were true, all animals should be born being logicians (*dialectica nasci oportet*) in order to understand the definition of “constitution” (*ut…istam finitionem …intellegant*). Of course, animals cannot understand the definition of their constitution, though they can understand it. Thus, even though an infant does not know what its constitution is, it knows it (*Ep*. 121, 10-11). **(iii)** The interesting point addressed by Galen is the idea that when a child gets older and can better express him-/herself, he or she can perform many actions following his/her concepts of those virtues. Of course, when the child grows up and his/her rational capacities are developed, the person is already capable of conceptualizing what is right and wrong. My point is that, even though the Stoics claim that nature provides us with unperverted starting points, they do not say that we are born having the clear *notion* of what is just or good. That is why it seems to me reasonable to assume that the first impulse aimed at self-preservation can be taken to be a certain kind of pre-intellectual good, which anyway is a decisive condition for the person’s character formation in the process that eventually can culminate in the correct development of rationality.

As suggested above, Galen’s remark that Chrysippus cannot explain the origin of vice because he is only focused on the best part of the soul is a critique that overlooks that Chrysippus does not accept a psychology of parts in conflict. This explains why he was puzzled (ἀπορεῖ) when trying to explain the origin of vice, and he was unable to find out how children are wrong (ἁμαρτάνει). This passage (where Posidonius’ position about οἰκείωσις is being scrutinized) is useful to show that Galen’s view in moral psychology presupposes the Platonic tripartition of the soul (i.e. a psychology that is foreign to the monistic psychological thesis of the Older Stoics). In the last three decades or so, several studies have reconsidered the position of Posidonius and have maintained that he did not reject the psychological monism of Chrysippus.[[27]](#footnote-27) The basic idea of this sort of interpretation is that in all sources –*with the exception of Galen*– Posidonius seems to have always been considered an “orthodox Stoic” in moral psychology. The problem in this case is that Galen is, most likely, the main source for reconstructing Chrysippus’ and Posidonius’ stances in matters of moral psychology, and what Galen informs us is that Chrysippus held a (in his opinion counterintuitive) monist view that does not admit parts in conflict.[[28]](#footnote-28) Indeed, Posidonius thought that Zeno and, above all, Cleanthes defended a psychological model based on the partition of the soul; according to Galen, Cleanthes describes the soul as an entity with two conflicting factors: λογισμός and θυμός.[[29]](#footnote-29) Anyway, if Galen were not ascribing to Posidonius a tripartite psychology (which he approves), his objection to Chrysippus regarding the Stoic inability to explain the origin of vice could not be understood.

Galen’s discussion suddenly is focused on moral goodness and badness. Hence, the way in which the Stoic good understood in terms of what is convenient for the living being at the first stage of its life, and the good in moral sense are somehow related: if the human animal is not able to preserve itself, it cannot develop a flourishing life in moral terms. This is the way that the awareness the human animal has works as a condition for determining any other posterior good. Human rationality, which is a crucial ingredient of human nature, should play a central role in the passage from childhood to adulthood. Interestingly, when one’s nature is unperverted, one’s reason is still not activated or developed. Thus, one’s nature starts being perverted when one’s reason begins to be developed. This sounds somewhat odd, but in part depends on the fact that, for a Stoic, having reason does not guarantee that one already has *right* reason. In fact, it depends on oneself to develop one’s reason in the correct way.

**§ 4 Hierocles’ contribution to explaining the relevance of self-awareness in developing one’s rationality in the right way**

Hierocles can shed light on the problem of nature’s corruption; in his *Elementa Ethica* (*El. Eth.*), I suggest, the matter can be analyzed from the perspective of the theory of assent and emotions. As is well-known, Hierocles is particularly concerned with animal self-awareness, but he is also interested in the psychological mechanism that takes place in the mind of a child. Let me briefly summarize Hierocles’ argument:[[30]](#footnote-30) the two factors that distinguish an animal from a non-animal are perception and impulse (*El. Eth.* I 30-37). The most relevant point here is that as soon as the animal is born, it perceives itself (a very “orthodox” Stoic view, if compared to Diogenes Laertius’ and Cicero’s versions of the point), so it is necessary to explain what is related to perception (or, more precisely, to self-perception, which in the context is tantamount to “awareness”). Indeed, perception has been bestowed on the animal by nature not only to perceive external things, Hierocles stresses, but also to grasp itself (*El. Eth.* I 45-46).[[31]](#footnote-31)

In the first part of his discussion he engages in a debate with those who think that perception has been given by nature to the animal for the grasp of external objects, not for grasping oneself as well (I 44-45). Once again, Hierocles’ argument is that awareness of oneself is a basic condition for having awareness of other things different from oneself. Self-perception seemingly is a condition for the perception of external objects;[[32]](#footnote-32) the first thing animals usually do is to perceive and to be aware of their own parts (winged animals not only perceive that they have wings, but *what they are for*). The first proof that every animal perceives itself is the awareness (συναίσθησις) of its parts and the functions of such parts (*El. Eth.* II 1-3).[[33]](#footnote-33) The second proof is that animals are not unaware of the means they are endowed with for their defense; this is obvious when two animals face each other in combat: each one uses its connatural weapons for its defense. Hierocles also shows that some animals are aware both of their weakest and strongest parts. But he goes even further, to the point of holding that irrational animals, no matter how fast, large or strong they may be, can realize the rational superiority of human beings (αἰσθόμενον τῆς περὶ τὸν λόγον ὑπεροχῆς; III 49-50). This view commits Hierocles to thinking that, at least in some irrational animals, there is a capacity that makes them realize that reason –a purely human faculty– makes human beings superior. As observed by Sorabji, many centuries later Avicenna distinguished the “estimative faculty” to explain the sheep’s knowledge that the wolf is dangerous.[[34]](#footnote-34) This, though, does not explain Hierocles’ passage, since his emphasis is upon the fact that irrational animals are able to notice the *rational* superiority of humans. The sheep’s knowledge that the wolf is dangerous can be accounted for in purely instinctive terms. Hierocles’ approach could introduce a difficulty insofar as it suggests that non-linguistic animals apparently perform a rational calculation.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The argument is much more refined, but this is enough for the sake of my purpose here; the preceding passages are helpful to introduce an interesting epistemological ingredient in the whole account: the apprehension of something external is not fulfilled without the previous perception of oneself (in fact, it is together with the perception of white that we perceive ourselves “whitened”, and together with the sweet “sweetened”; *El. Eth.* VI 3 ff.). The way in which Hiercoles explains how child’s nature is perverted, I think, somewhat depends upon the role of impressions and how the child assents to them. The animal, on receiving the first perception of itself, immediately becomes familiar with itself (ᾠκειώθη πρὸς ἑαυτῷ. *El. Eth*. VI 50). Now, if animals had no powerful love for themselves, their survival would be impossible. One might think that perception of oneself seems somewhat to depend on perception of external objects; that is why newborns do not tolerate being enclosed in dark rooms, for if they are unable to hear or see anything, “they receive an impression of their own destruction” (VII 9); this turns out to be intolerable because they are experiencing fear (one of the four basic Stoic emotions). What Hierocles is stating is that, children receive impressions and assent to them; otherwise, they could not undergo fear. But the problem is that young children do not have their reason developed yet; so, if one thinks of the orthodox way in which Chrysippus accounts for emotions and the role that assent plays in the production of an emotion, this seems to introduce a problem. In fact, undergoing an emotional state presupposes having given assent to a certain representational content; if this is so, the infant’s reason is already perverted (otherwise, the child had not given his assent to such propositional content).

One of the relevant aspects of this story lies in the fact that self-recognition not only reveals, for instance, that one has hands and what they are for, but it also shows that one has a mind (and that one somewhat is his own mind). If the issue of self-recognition is analyzed in terms of the theory of assent, one should say that, even young children are able to assent to cognitive impressions (such as, “this is my hand and it serves to catch things”;[[36]](#footnote-36) young children do not have the concept of hand, but that is not relevant at the early stage of human development; Seneca, *Ep*. 121, 11-12). Now, when some impression of oneself occurs the animal holds onto the persuasive aspect of said impression (τὸ πιθανὸν ἴσχει) and hence assent to it (τούτῳ συγκατατίθεται; *El. Eth.* VI 25-27). In the description of what happens to the infant when it is enclosed in a dark room, the newborn is aware of its own destruction in terms of its *physical* individuality, but also of what such a destruction means in terms of its *psychological* individuality. Following the Stoic orthodoxy, Hierocles indeed thinks that both physical and psychological “individuality” are bodily(*El. Eth*. III 57-59), but they are different dimensions of the whole person. When the infant perceives that she has hands and what they are for, she is aware of her body and assents to impressions (presumably cognitive impressions), such as “this is *my* hand,” “it is a part of *my own* body,” and so on; but when she finds it intolerable to be enclosed in a dark room and receives an impression of her own destruction, she is aware of her “vital” individuality, as it were, because she is aware of herself as a διάνοια. This enables her to enter into the psychological dimension of her own existence (recall that according to the model of concentric circles, the first and closest circle is that which each person draws around herself as “the center”; Stobaeus, *Anth*. IV 671, 11-13).

When the infant realizes that she is a mind, she perceives and recognizes herself beyond her merely “instrumental” parts; i.e. she is aware that she can lose her arm, but that is not the same as losing her mind, which is what provides her identity. When the individual realizes how relevant her mind is, she also is aware that she, as a person, is more than the sum of her parts. However, when Hierocles introduces the issue of assent, a difficulty arises: when the newborn infants (τὰ νεαρὰ παιδάρια) assent to the impression that death looms close because of being enclosed in a dark room, their soul must already be perverted; this is so because the newborns’ assent to such an impression has as a result an emotional state. But a Stoic emotion is, according to one of the Stoic definitions of πάθος, a perverted reason (λόγος πονηρός) that stems from a bad and erroneous judgement; (Galen, *PHP* 254, 13-31; 256, 14; Plutarch, *De virtute morali* 441D; *SVF* I 202).[[37]](#footnote-37) Notwithstanding, if one thinks of Hierocles’ example of the newborns enclosed in a dark room, and applies the standard Stoic definitions of emotion to them, one might wonder how it is possible that their feeling of fear can be explained by saying that their reason is perverse. Hierocles evokes the Stoic view that the sage person (i.e. a person whose soul certainly is not corrupted) is emotionless (DL VII 117), although in the passage in question, he simply recommends that if one pretends to behave rightly toward his country, one “must rid himself of every passion and illness (νόσημα) of the soul” (transl. Konstan-Ramelli).[[38]](#footnote-38)

The recognition of one’s psychological capacities opens a new dimension in the process of progressive insertion of the human animal into the world; later, at the moment of “social” familiarizationthe human being continues to think of his self-interest, but this self-interest is (or can be) integrated with the interest in others.[[39]](#footnote-39) A more emphatic version of this approach appears in the remarkable Hierocles passage where he emphasizes that reciprocal relationships occurring among the circles (κύκλοι, representing people and different types of relationships between them) are different and unequal, no doubt referring to the closeness or remoteness that one experiences with others.[[40]](#footnote-40) At the center of the circles is one’s own mind, but now self-care is possible if it is integrated into the care of others (Stobaeus, *Anthol.* IV 672, 2-6).

An indispensable condition for this to occur is that rationality emerge, and that such rationality be properly trained. This allows us to understand that the perception of oneself as being a mind facilitates extending what one takes to be good beyond the egoistic instinctive sphere; it also allows one to begin considering one’s own good integrated into the care of others. This process, though, can only take place when one’s reason has been rightly developed and extends to the wider circle (the whole human race). Hierocles’ idea seems to be that just as one’s διάνοιαextends its affection with the διάνοιαι of those who are in other circles, so too the other circles must make that same extension regarding oneself. After all, we all have the same rational nature, and since the just is by nature (not by convention; Stobaeus, *Ecl*. II 93, 19-94, 20) and familiarization is the principle of justice (Porphyry, *De abs.* III 19-20; *SVF* I 197), it follows that there is nothing outrageous about thinking not only that I, as the center of the concentric circles model, should extend my own interest toward the interest of others, but that others, in their own self-care movement, turn to me with the same interest with which they turn to themselves.

**§5** **The orientation towards what is good and the persuasiveness of impressions. Concluding Remarks**

So far, I have argued that, against what Galen assumes, when asserting that infants have a natural orientation towards good, the Stoics are not stating that young children already have a *notion* of what is virtuous. Galen is right in pointing out that,as children grow older,they can carry out virtuous actions following their *concepts* of those virtues. Nevertheless, the Stoics do not imply that a newborn is able to do that when they claim that the natural orientation is toward good. By their nature, young children only have the innate capacity to develop a right reason which will allow them (at some point during their development) to correctly determine what is good. However, according to the Stoics, all humans share a common rational background; if this is so, one could wonder how evaluative concepts could mean different things to different people. Epictetus’ account can be helpful here: people need an education, not in order to teach us what is good and bad, but to teach us *to apply* our preconceptions of rational and irrational (and presumably of what is good and bad) to particular cases according to nature (*Dissertationes* [*Diss.*] I 2, 5; II 11, 1-11). Such a process to learn to rightly apply (i.e. “according to nature”) one’s preconception of what is good proves that one’s natural orientation toward good is explained by the possession of an innate preconception of what is right.[[41]](#footnote-41) Thus, what the Stoics mean is not that newborns have a real understanding of moral issues, but that until the person has refined his or her cognitive abilities, such a person will not be able to *conceptually* recognize what is truly good and eventually practice it.

At the outset of this paper, drawing on what Graver suggests, I have pointed out that the kind of innatism related to natural human inclinations toward good should be understood as a dispositional innateness. Several sources describe the way in which the Stoics explain how a moral concept arises; DL VII 53 maintains that something which is taken to be just and good is conceived (νοεῖται) “naturally” (φυσικῶς). The text is very brief and rather cryptic, so it is not simple to know what the expression φυσικῶς means here. Perhaps it merely refers to the way in which we naturally acquire concepts: through sense perception (αἴσθησις).[[42]](#footnote-42) On the other hand, φυσικῶς could also indicate the peculiar nature of the person who forms concepts, because between good and the way in which we conceive it lies a natural affinity.[[43]](#footnote-43) Cicero also reports the Stoic account about concept formation (*Fin*. III 33-34). His version of concept formation has a strongly empiricist character (which is not at all peculiar in an empiricist epistemology such as the Stoic one);[[44]](#footnote-44) but he immediately adds that we perceive real good and call it good not as the result of addition, increase or comparison with other things, but on account of its own power (*vis*). Our concept of good arises by rational inference, as it is because of this rational process that our mind “ascends” from the things according to nature to the notion of good (*ad notionem boni*). Cicero’s point (probably evoking the Stoic account) is that we perceive (i.e., “we are aware of”: *sentimus*) such good because of its own strength. Just as honey (the sweetest thing) is perceived as sweet through its own specific kind of flavor (not through comparison with other things), so too good is supremely valuable, but that value is specific to itself; it does not depend on its magnitude (it’s a matter of quality, not of quantity).

Now if in order to reach the notion of good, we need a rational inference, the awareness of the concept of good should be posterior in the human animal’s development, but that does not prevent the person from (i) having an inclination to the first appropriate thing (self-preservation, which can be taken to be a certain “good” as well) and (ii) having such inclination somehow due to the preconception of good, which is a notion implanted in the person by nature. Hence, at the initial state of life, one does not need to perform actions following one’s *concept* of what is good (further, the Stoics do not think that newborns “perform actions” in the strict sense: insofar as their reason is not developed yet, their condition is not different from irrational animals, where there is no distinction between good and bad yet). An implicit assumption of the whole discussion is that human beings are constitutively “attracted” to good (this attraction probably being implicit in human nature), which does not mean that every human being will be a good person from the beginning (or even after the person has achieved complete rational development).[[45]](#footnote-45) Thus, the fact that one is constitutively attracted to the good does not mean that one will carry out good actions immediately after one is born; human beings, by the mere fact of being humans, have the *capacity* to theoretically identify what is good (when their rationality is mature), to distinguish it from evil, and eventually to apply what the agent takes to be good to action.[[46]](#footnote-46)

My final point focuses on “the persuasiveness of impressions”, the second cause of perversion of one’s nature according to Chrysippus. I propose to explain the expression by resorting to Epictetus, who cites it (*Diss*. II 22, 6: ταράττῃ … αἱ πιθανότητες αὐτῶν) probably bearing Chrysippus in mind. According to Epictetus, the third topic philosophy deals with concerns assent (*Diss*. III 2, 2), and while stating that we ought not to accept an impression (which is related to the things which are persuasive and attractive: τὰ πιθανὰ καὶ ἑλκυστικά; III 12, 14) without examination, he evokes the psychology of action, according to which the assent to a certain kind of impression (impulsive impression) produces an impulse which culminates in action.[[47]](#footnote-47) What Epictetus recommends is that one should avoid precipitancy while giving assent. However, the fool is incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, since by incorrectly using his impressions and incorrectly distinguishing between them, he is disturbed and surpassed by false impressions and by their persuasiveness. The immediate effect is that the agent first believes that *x* is good, then that the same *x* is bad, and later that it is neither the one nor the other. (*Diss.* II 22, 6; 25).[[48]](#footnote-48) Whoever has his cognitive abilities properly trained, on the other hand, will have his character well-disposed and will notice that good is his own choice (or “volition”; προαίρεσις) correctly disposed (*Diss*. I 8, 16; I 29, 1). One will have a good life only if one makes correct use of his impressions (a theme on which Epictetus frequently insists),[[49]](#footnote-49) which is dependent on the agent. Humans cannot remove impressions (φαντασίαι), but adult human beings can critically examine them, so as to reject those that have not passed the examination of (right) reason. Epictetus insists that nature has endowed us with reason to correctly use our impressions, which is nothing more than to examine and distinguish between them, and not accept any that has not been examined (*Diss.* I 20 5-8). External things (τὰ ἐκτός) are the materials of our choice, and the only way by which the choice will attain proper good is not to have a special consideration for such materials: if one’s own beliefs (δόγματα) regarding them are correct, they will make our choice good; if perverse or distorted, they will make it evil (*Diss*. I 29, 2-4). Ultimately, individual responsibility lies not in impressions, but in the correct use each of us makes of them.

Finally, if a fool is ignorant, what can be done to be aware of, and eventually reverse, that ignorance? If the peculiar task of the good person is to deal properly with his/her impressions (i.e. to do what is “according to nature”; *Diss.* III 3, 1) and if one chooses the correct course of action when doing so, whoever makes correct use of his/her impressions must already be wise. If this is not the case, one should think that the agent’s own evaluation of an impression would necessarily be incorrect. However, when good appears to a person, said good immediately activates the soul toward it, while when evil appears, the soul moves away from it, because “a soul will never reject a clear impression of good” (*Diss.* III 3, 4; transl. R. Hard). But, whose soul? If Epictetus is thinking of the wise person, there is no problem; but if he thinks that this also occurs in the fool’s soul, the account seems implausible. No doubt, one needs to have true beliefs in order to be able not to reject a clear impression of good. Perhaps Epictetus is only pointing out the natural disposition that rational beings have toward good insofar as all rational beings are born with an “implanted” conception of good and evil (*Diss.* II 11, 3-4), hence the agent will be completely rational when she is able to recognize what is good, at the theoretical level, and to act well at the practical one. Thus, there is an essential relationship between good as an object of impulse and good as an object of knowledge; but the impression of real good, not of apparent good, is the only one capable of setting the correct impulse (that the agent translates into a virtuous action) in motion. That is why in the virtuous agent good and right reason coincide.

To Galen’s question as to why “pleasure projects a persuasive impression as if it were good, and pain a persuasive impression as if it were an evil,” Chrysippus could reply that, although pleasure appears to be good, the soul of the virtuous agent will never find such an appearance persuasive enough as to give assent.

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1. Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* (*PHP*)V 5, 316, 28-320, 28, ed. De Lacy. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stobaeus, *Eclogae physicae et ethicae* [*Ecl.*] 62, 9-11; II 65, 8-9, ed. Wachsmuth. The view that human beings have a natural tendency towards what is good is also reported by other sources (Calcidius, *In Tim*. chap. 165*; SVF* III 229. Musonius Rufus, *Dissertationes* [*Diss*.] III, p. 9, 15-9, 16, ed. Hense). Seneca states that the well born is the person “well set up by nature for virtue” (*Epistulae Morales* [*Ep.*] 44, 5). Of course, this does not mean that virtue is given without qualification; as warned by Seneca, virtue will not simply descend on oneself and is not discovered by trivial work or a small effort (*Ep.* 76, 6). In Seneca’s *Ep.* 120 the main subject of discussion is how humans have acquired the knowledge of good and evil (for discussion see Hadot 2014, 15 ff. and Gloyn, 2014, 239, n.19). See also Cicero, *De finibus* [*Fin*.] III 23; he maintains that, even though all due acts (*officia*) originate from nature’s principles and we are commended (*commendari*) to wisdom by the starting-points of nature (*ab initiis naturae*), one gets perfect rationality *only over time*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The technical Stoic term normally associated to the animal’s inclination to what is good (ἀφορμή) also explains that Panaetius has claimed that the goal is living according to the ἀφορμαί given to us by nature (cf. Clement, *Stromateis* II 21, 129, 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Galen, *PHP* 318. Sorabji (2000, 257) summarizes thoughtfully the way in which Galen presents the problem. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Galen, *PHP* 14, 1. On this see Tieleman 2003, 132–139; Gill 2006, 257-258; 385. Seneca renders διαστροφή by *perversitas* (*Ep*. 95, 34; also, *pravitas*; *Ep*. 50, 4; 122, 5). For discussion see Berno, 2014, 371-372; 378-379. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Galen, *PHP* 318, 12-26 where he ascribes to Posidonius three kinds of οἰκείωσις which “by nature” (φύσει) are related to each part of the soul (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, which refers to pleasure; τὸ θυμοειδές, which is related to victory, and τὸ λογιστικόν, which is concerned with what is noble). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Galen, *PHP* 288, 22-290, 1; 292, 17-25, and especially 334, 24-30, a suggestive passage where Zenon’s view is seen as an intermediate between “the worst position” (Chrysippus) and “the best one” (Hippocrates and Plato). Posidonius maintains that the end is “to live in contemplation of the truth and orderliness of the universe and being in no respect guided by *the irrational part of the soul* (ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀλόγου μέρους τῆς ψυχῆς. Clement*, Stromateis* II 2, 129, 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Galen is probably drawing on Plato, *Republic* 441a8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Aëtius IV 11, 1–5 (Pseudo-Plutarch, *On the Doctrines of the Philosophers* 900a–d). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Gill 2006, 129-130. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This, as emphasized by Gill (2006, 131), does not constitute virtue yet. In order to reach virtue, one must be able to attain a complete understanding of the good and that only can be acquired once one’s reason has been (correctly) developed (Gill 2006, 133). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Graver 2007, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* (*TD*) III 2, where he stresses that “seeds of virtues” are inborn (*semina innata virtutum*) in our characters (see Seneca *Ep*. 120, 4: *semen scientiae*). *Fin.* V is not supposed to report Stoic doctrine, but this assertion is unquestionably Stoic. Moreover, according to Cicero (*De legibus* I 27), nature has given us a kind of common understanding (*communis intellegentia*), so that we are able to identify the noble with virtue and the clumsy with vice. This “intelligence” or understanding, “sketched or imperfect” (*inchoata*) is straightforwardly related to the Stoic thesis, attested by Seneca (*Ep*. 49, 11-12; 120, 30), that nature has not given us the concept or knowledge of righteousness, but rather “seeds of that knowledge” (the same idea can be found in Musonius Rufus, *Diss*. II, p. 6, 5 ff.; p. 7, 12 ff. ed. Hense). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Graver 2007, 149-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Graver, 2007, 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Graver 2007, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See Annas 1993, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. For a connection in this direction see Frede 1999, 72-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Even Musonius Rufus provides an argument against the view that the first impulse is towards pleasure (*Diss*. XXIV). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1172b9-10 and, before him, Plato, *Philebus* 11b, when he presents the view of crude hedonism. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. On this see Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 3.194 (Usener 398); see also Cicero, *De fin*. I 29-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. A similar idea can be found in Musonius Rufus (*Diss.* XVII, p. 89, 5–8, ed. Hense). But see DL VII 148, where several Stoic philosophers (including Chrysippus, Posidonius, Antipater and Boethus) are said to have suggested that nature aims both at advantageous and at pleasure (τοῦ συμφέροντος στοχάζεσθαι καὶ ἡδονῆς), and that this is obvious from human artisan activity (ἐκ τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου δημιουργίας). As Long & Sedley observe (1987) vol. II, pp. 264-265), there is no other evidence that fully confirms or explains this claim, and with some doubt they suggest interpreting the word ἡδονή as a very general term for “gratification” or “contentment”. Attractive as this suggestion sounds, it does not solve the issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. For the sake of my purpose here, I just present the argument in a very schematic way; for detailed discussion of this passage see Inwood 1985,184-194 (who, in my view, provides the clearest discussion of the issue). See also Annas 1993, 263-267; Cooper 1999, 434-444; Kühn 2011, 2070-279. Interestingly Ioppolo (2013, 175) notes that if the distortion of reason is a moral psychological process, the representations that arouse passions must have as their object good or evil. From birth, Ioppolo holds, the child associates the concept of good with the representation that comes from healthy and useful things for its preservation. The problem with this view is that newborns do not have concepts yet. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Clement, apparently evoking a Stoic view, points out that “the sensation of pleasure” (τὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς πάθος) is not at all a necessity (καθόλου …οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον), but “the accompaniment of certain natural needs” (ἐπακολούθημα δὲ χρείαις τισὶ φυσικαῖς), such as hunger, thirst, cold, marriage (this last “natural need” must be taken for granted to beget children; see *Stromateis* II 20,118.7-119.3; *SVF* III 405). Pleasure has been introduced into life as a sort of “auxiliary” (ὑπουργία), but it is neither an activity (ἐνέργεια), nor a disposition (διάθεσις), nor any part of us. The most important philosophical antecedent regarding the fact that pleasure is a certain kind of ἐπιγέννημα is Aristotle, who argues that “pleasure completes the activity not as the inherent state (ὡς ἡ ἕξις ἐνυπάρχουσα) does but as an end which *supervenes*” (ὡς *ἐπιγινόμενόν* τι τέλος; *EN* 1174b32-33, transl. Barnes & Kenny). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Furthermore, probably one should not be so demanding with the Stoics; if Cicero is right, what nature has in fact given us are only the “tiniest sparks of understanding” (*parvulos nobis dedit igniculos*). We are corrupted by our wrongful habits and beliefs (*TD* III 2). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See Galen, *PHP* 316, 28-320, 28 (*SVF* 3.229a). This can be taken as part of Galen’s argument against the Stoic view that an emotion is just one’s reason disposed in a certain way: since children do not have reason yet (i.e. they do not have developed their reason), and in fact they have emotions, an emotion cannot be reason. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See especially Fillion-Lahille 1984, 122-123; 153. Gill 1998 and Cooper 1999, 451-455; 467-468. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. In Galen’s view, Posidonius endorses a more reasonable tripartite position (see Clement’s testimony, n.7 above). Despite the sophisticated arguments offered by the scholars just mentioned, I still believe that Posidonius must have defended a tripartite psychology (if it were not so, the three types of οἰκείωσις distinguished in this passage would not be understandable; maybe the issue can be solved if, as suggested by Isnardi Parente1989, 2220, it’s just a division of the faculties of the soul, not of its οὐσία). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. For a monistic reading of Cleanthes’ passage, allow me to refer to [removed for evaluation]. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. For a detailed analysis of Hierocles’ argument see Isnardi Parente, 1989, 2203-2209; Bastianini & Long, 1992; Ramelli 2009, 39-50; Gourinat 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. In the context ἀντίληψις (“grasp”) is the same as perception (αἴσθησις). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Badalamenti 1987 (quoted by Aoiz & Davis 2014, 138-139; 145) argues that perception of itself is logically and chronologically prior to perception of external objects. The point is difficult, but as convincingly argued by Aoiz & Davis 2014, 142, 146, there seems to be a sort of interdependence between perception of oneself and of the external objects (see also Ramelli 2009, xxxix). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For the self-awareness of the living being see Alesse 2008, 444-449; Ramelli 2009, 40-41; Gourinat, 2016, 35-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Sorabji 2000, 146-147. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Commentators say nothing about this issue; Ramelli 2009, xxxix mentions the issue of rational superiority but sees no especial problem; the same goes for Aoiz & Davis 2014, 142. Gourinat 2016, 43, after quoting Bastianini-Long 1992, 408, just limits himself to observing that animals perceive the strengths or weaknesses of the other animals related to themselves. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math*. VII 242-243; impressions such as “it is day”, “I am conversing” are examples of true persuasive impressions. A cognitive impression is the one that arises from “that which is” (ὑπάρχον), is exactly in accordance with that which is, and accurately represents the object (DL VII 46, 49-51; Sextus, *Adv. Math.* VII 247–52); but insofar as it is a clear and distinct impression (which by its very nature cannot be false), it must be cognitive impression. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. For the other definitions of πάθος see DL VII 110 (where διαστροφή is said to arise to the διάνοια due to falsehoods); DL VII 116 (*SVF* I 205). Galen, *PHP* 240, 36-242, 11; 246, 36-248, 3. Stobaeus, *Ecl*. II 88, 8-12). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Stobaeus, *Anth.* III 73, 7-8. For the idea that an emotion is a sickness of the soul see Lactantius*, Divine Institutions* VI 14 (cf. *SVF* III 444); Seneca, *Ep.* 116, 1. Cicero says that he will use the definitions of the Stoics in describing “these disturbances”; *perturbationes* is the word he uses to refer to emotions. As he says (*TD* III 7; IV 9-10), he prefers to call them “disturbances” rather than “diseases” (see also *Fin*. III 35). Inwood is quite right to point out that Cicero’s interpretation is not fortunate, because it seems to confuse the state of the soul which produces a πάθος with the πάθος itself (cf. Inwood 1985, 127-128). In the Greek sources πάθη are never said to be “disturbances”; they arise as a result of the sickness (νόσημα) in which the agent is. For an illuminating discussion of this aspect of the question cf. Donini 1995, 324 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. In addition to the already mentioned passages by DL, Cicero, Seneca, and Hierocles, see Epictetus *Diss*. I 19, 11-15 and Marcus Aurelius VII 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. A detailed discussion of the passage has been furnished recently by Kuhn, 2011, 341-347. As noted by Alesse (1997, 143-144), the version of the concentric circles in Cicero (*De officiis* I 53-54), unlike the Hierocles model, starts from the largest sphere of humankind (I 53: *immensa societate humani generis*), the sphere that necessarily includes all the spheres included in it. The connection between Seneca and Hierocles’ circles is stressed by Gloyn 2014, 231, n.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Regarding concept formation, the Stoic empiricism should deny any form of innatism; for the sake of coherence, one might assume, the origin of a concept must be the result of a perceptual impression (for this view, see removed for evaluation). The issue of preconceptions in Stoicism and how it can be said that they are “innate” or “inborn” (Plutarch, *De stoic. rep.* 1041E-1042A; *SVF* III 69: ἔμφυτοι προλήψεις) have been widely discussed. In his pioneering book on Epictetus, Bonhöffer (1890, 193-203) attempted to show that the Stoic preconceptions do not depend on perceptual experience, since they are limited to practical concepts. Sandbach (1971, 22-23; 35, n.12) challenges Bonhöffer’s view by showing some textual evidence that indicates that any concept depends on experience (in favor of Bonhöffer’s interpretation see Hadot 2014, 10-11, 17, who draws on M. Jackson-McCabe 2004). For a fresh discussion of the topic, see Scott (1995, 202-204), who defends a dispositional approach to Stoic innatism. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. For a detailed discussion of the passage see Hadot 2014, 24 (where she argues that φυσικῶς in Diocles’s account is not based on sense perception; see also 28-29). Chrysippus is said to have argued that good (as well as evil) is perceptible (Plutarch, *De stoic. repug.* 1042E-1043A). The Stoic argument can be reconstructed thus: if quality is breath or matter in a certain state (as it is according to the Stoics; Plotinus, VI 1, 29; *SVF* II 376. Alexander, *In Arist. Top.* 360, 10; *SVF* II 379. Plutarch, *De comm. not.* 1085E; *SVF* II 380), and if the qualities of bodily things must be bodily themselves, then, the qualities of the soul (virtues, vices, knowledge, ignorance) must be bodily as well and they are perceptible (Plutarch, *De comm. not.* 1084A; *SVF* II 848. Seneca, *Ep.* 102, 2-7; *SVF* III 84. Seneca, *Ep.* 113, 7-11; *SVF* III 75). But, of course, on thing is to say that the good is conceived “naturally” (insofar as one naturally acquires it through sense perception), and another thing is to say that good is perceptible. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. This is Ioppolo’s suggestion, 1986, 179, n. 48 (which I find convincing). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Concepts (*Fin*. III 33) are formed in our minds by experience (*usu*), association of ideas (*coniunctione*), analogy (*similitudin*e) and rational inference (*collatione rationis*). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The first and most obvious attraction experienced by the human animal is the instinctive attraction in the first stage of its development (self-preservation, a kind of attraction which takes care of one’s condition as a psychophysical organism; on this see Gill 2006, 130). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Once more, Epictetus is helpful to better comprehend this approach: he stresses that the good is something innate, and suggests that when there is an “clear impression (or appearance) of the good” (ἀγαθοῦ φαντασίαν ἐναργῆ; *Diss*. III 3, 4), the agent cannot do anything else than give his assent, which means to assent to the propositional content of the “clear impression of the good”. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See Stobaeus, *Ecl*. II 86, 17-18 (*SVF* III 169, 171, 173); on “impulsive impression” as the sort of impression whose assent gives rise to an impulse and action cf. also Origen, *De principiis* III 1, 2, 11-12, and Epictetus, *Diss*. I 1, 12, 2; I 21, 2; III 8, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. This reminds Medea’s character, a Chrysippus’ favorite example to account for the weakness of character. On this see Galen, *PHP* 270, 10-24; 272, 9-274, 26 (*SVF* III 473); his purpose is to show that Chrysippus contradicts himself when he argues that emotions are judgments, for at the same time he accepts that although Menelaus had formed his judgement to kill Helena and drew his sword to do so, when he approached her, moved by her beauty and “because of the absence of tension and the weakness of his soul”, he not only got rid of his sword, but kissed the woman and put himself in her hands. If this is so, Galen concludes, Chrysippus accepts the existence of a psychological conflict. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See *Diss.* I 1, 7; I 1, 12; I 6, 13. Even “the essence” of the good and the evil depends on the (correct) use of impressions (II 1, 4). For discussion, see Long 2002, 85; 214-217. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)