INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE PSYCHOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY OF EPICTETUS.

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THESIS
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The subject of this thesis is the relationship of the psychology and epistemology of the philosopher Epictetus (c.55-135 A.D.) to the Stoic tradition to which he belonged. Epictetus' psychology is characterised by the subsuming of psychological functions and development under the single term *prohairesis*, and his epistemology under a corresponding term 'use of impressions' (*chrêsis phantasiôn*); the two terms being used largely interchangeably. The status of the *prohairesis* as a faculty is investigated and it is concluded that it is the principal over-arching faculty of the governing-principle of the soul (*hêgemonikon*), and thus occupies a similar position to that occupied by Reason (*logos*) in the Stoic tradition.

Prohairesis is used to define the 'end' and 'good' for man in Epictetus' teaching, displacing 'wisdom' and 'virtue' with '*prohairesis* as it ought to be'. Epictetus thus seeks to reflect the concerns of the 'person making progress' by making the end an extreme point on a continuum of mental and moral states on which he already occupies a place.

The self-contemplating ability of *prohairesis* allows it to be used to define the human self as a single unified consciousness, and also distinguish it from 'external' things outwith our power. The redefining of all things external to the mind as outwith our power is Epictetus' most significant innovation.

Epistemology is closely linked to psychology. The 'use of impressions' involves using 'preconceptions' (*prolêpseis*) and 'rules' (*kanones*) to test incoming impressions. The aim is not to allow any false judgement to be installed permanently in the *prohairesis* and thus hinder moral progress. The substitution of the term judgement (*dogma*) for 'cognition' (*katalêpsis*) allows Epictetus to draw attention to the need to replace poor judgements with better ones.

The thesis concludes that Epictetus introduces a number of innovations to

Stoicism and also develops established doctrines to reflect his emphasis on the 'inner life' and on the moral development of ordinary people.

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Introduction.

This thesis began as a word-study on the use of *prohairesis* and 'use of impressions' (*chrêsis phantasiôn*) as technical terms in Epictetus, and in many respects it retains some of the character of such a study. This is something of an advantage. It is of the character of Stoicism that it strives to be a highly systematic and unified system, and this often makes it difficult to find an obvious place to begin. The analysis of the use and meaning of technical terms gives one the opportunity to plunge *in medias res*, and explain other features in context. The reader coming freshly to Epictetus cannot help be struck by the frequency and importance of these two terms, which very quickly establish themselves as, to all intents and purposes, equivalent (2.23.8-9)[1]. This reflects one of the systematic problems which we alluded to above. Since Zeno defined an 'impression' as a material event in the soul, and the explanation of psychological change (DL 7.45-6), it is impossible to separate 'psychological' from 'epistemological' activity. So these two expressions are used to express Epictetus' idea of what defines the self, of what is within our power and for which we are morally responsible, and also define how we perceive and make judgements about the world around us. What is as striking as the frequency of these terms in Epictetus, is their infrequency in the testimony of the earlier Stoics. *Prohairesis* scarcely appears at all, and 'use of impressions' never. Yet they are the defining concepts of the psychology, epistemology and ethics of Epictetus. Inevitably, therefore, one's interest is engaged, and the first question which springs to mind is whether or not some great innovation in Stoic theory is being represented.

Most of the secondary literature which has taken account of Epictetus has been content to make general observations about the use of these terms. Adolf Bonhöffer, the greatest of all Epictetans, makes little detailed comment. He notes the association of 'use of impressions' with making judgements about the worth of things[2], and with

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[1] Three-figure references of this type are to the text of Epictetus' *Diatribai* unless otherwise indicated. Three-figure references in bold type: eg. **1.2.3**, are to sections within the thesis itself.

[2] *Epictet und die Stoa* (Stuttgart 1890) p.140; cf, Epictetus III 8₁. (Three-figure references in this form will be to Epictetus' *Diatribai* unless otherwise indicated.

freedom (*op.cit.* 170) and suggests that *prohairesis* might be some kind of general term for the faculty of will, observing that it seems at times equivalent to *logos* or *dianoia* (reason, or the mind). Max Pohlenz characterised *prohairesis* as a 'general preliminary decision', which then enables one to deal with individual cases[3], while Albrecht Dihle, by complete contrast, seeks to emphasise what he sees as a 'voluntaristic' element[4]. So, although the *importance* of these terms to Epictetus' philosophy is widely recognized, there is no real consensus as regards their actual meaning, and even a certain amount of reticence.

A bolder step was taken by A.A. Long, in an article published a number of years ago on the psychology of the Stoics[5]. Long draws attention to Epictetus' tendency to group together a family of terms including 'faculty which uses impressions', 'reasoning faculty' and *prohairesis* (or 'prohairetic faculty'):

> 'What does he mean by this faculty? He glosses it in a number of ways. It is our reasoning faculty, the only faculty we have that can have cognizance of itself as well as everything else. It is our desiderative and impulsive faculty. It is our capacity to give or withhold assent. It is the faculty that tells us whether or not to do something, that passes judgement on the truth and value of anything of which we have a presentation.'[6]

This is a description which has considerable resonance for anyone who has studied the philosophy of the Stoics. 'Reason', 'Impulse' and the 'giving or withholding of assent' are, as we shall see, terms of central significance to the system, and it is in a position of centrality that Long is placing (rightly in our view) this faculty.

According to Long the *prohairesis* in Epictetus is 'the essential self...the bearer of personal identity'. How we react to impressions and the dispositional state which

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[3] *Freedom in Greek Life and Thought* (Eng.version. Dordrecht 1966), p.153

[4] *The Theory of the Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley 1982) pp.60-1;134-5.

[5] 'Representation and the self in Stoicism' in S. Everson (ed), *Companions to Ancient Thought* 2: *Psychology* (Cambridge 1991).

[6] *ibid.* pp.111-112

defines how we react to them, is what we *are*. It is our most significant activity, and indeed, as Long points out, and Epictetus continually emphasises (eg.2.5.4), the only thing genuinely in our power.

A similar approach was recently taken by one of Long's pupils, Robert Dobbin in a Ph.D. thesis at Berkeley[7]. He focuses on the *prohairesis* as a definition of the self, observing that in Epictetus it is an 'aggregate of wants, desires and commitments' (*ibid.*p.37). The *prohairesis* is something which we work on and develop through self-examination (*ibid.*p.40-1). This crucial observation leads Dobbin to conclude that the *prohairesis* can be thought of in terms of 'intentional states'(*ibid.*p.33): the 'capability of the self to formulate reasons'. This is a helpful approach particularly because it accommodates easily the equivalence with 'use of impressions'. We 'use impressions' as it were, to reflect upon our intentional states, and change them, where appropriate. Dobbin also draws our attention to the importance of another term which is used in Epictetus' psychology to refer to aspects of the self: the *prosôpon*, or rôle, showing how the *prohairesis* functions in respect of the wider world through the medium of these rôles, which it has some autonomous power to develop through the use of impressions. We shall consider some aspects of the function of *prohairesis* and the *prosôpa* in defining the 'self' in chapter 4.

It was always Stoic doctrine that our response to impressions creates dispositions which themselves influence our further responses — this is a crucial feature of the view of human freedom in Cicero's *De Fato*, for example. For Epictetus, this is a central emphasis: one which defines his moral system. Epictetus seems to have been influenced in this regard by his interest in 'progress' (*prokopê*), a rare preoccupation among the earlier Stoics, and the status of the 'person making progress' or *prokoptôn*. That the later Stoics were more concerned with this kind of moral development and the needs of those undertaking it for instruction, than their predecessors, is by no means an original observation[8]. However, we shall be able to observe how this influences Epictetus thinking in a number of areas.

While Epictetus is interested in the traditional Stoic definitions of the end of

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[7] *The Sense of Self in Epictetus: Prohairesis and Prosopon* (1989).

[8] eg. J. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge 1969) p.230

human life: virtue or wisdom, his own preferred formula is '*prohairesis* as it ought to be' or 'use of impressions as one ought' (*hoia dei*). As Robert Dobbin points out, *prohairesis* is a 'neutral term' which requires to be qualified before it can stand as a telos-formula[9]. Epictetus thus draws attention to the fact that, if, as the Stoics believed, the state of the wise man was a perfect disposition of the governing-principle of the soul, this state must be an extreme point on a continuum. The current state of our *prohairesis* must therefore also be a point on that continuum. As we shall try to demonstrate, Epictetus' system is aimed at directing the pupil towards understanding his place on this continuum and seeking to cognitively improve it.

This cognitive improvement lies in the use of impressions, and particularly in the making of judgments (*dogmata* 1.29.3). We seek to examine our judgements, just as we examine the state of the *prohairesis* and then replace 'bad' judgements with 'good' ones. These 'good' judgements, which lead to our moral development, are assents to impressions which are true, and consequently seem to play a similar rôle in Epictetus' system to the 'cognitions' (*katalêpseis*) in the earlier Stoa. This change of terminology, and Epictetus' possible motivation for it, is a question which we shall seek to examine in greater detail in chapter 5. Epictetus seems to be being influenced by a similar line of thought which caused him to change the telos-formula to one which must be qualified as 'good' or 'bad'. By unifying the term for a judgement or assent to an impression, Epictetus thus demonstrates more clearly and practically to the *prokoptôn* how he may move up (and down) this continuum of moral states.

As Long points out, Epictetus tells us that our mental activity is the only thing which is truly in our power (*eph'hêmin*; 1.22.10; 2.5.4). For the earlier Stoics the response to an impression, whether it be assent, or refusal of assent, is the seat *par excellence* of human freedom: it is the point at which something 'up to us' enters into the chain of causes by which Providence operates in the world. However, the earlier Stoics had a preoccupation which seems to be absent in Epictetus: that of responsibility for our actions. The Stoics assume that, if the decision which is the principal cause of our actions is in our power, then our actions can themselves be said to be in our power. Epictetus does not seem convinced of this. He draws attention to all the other

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[9] 'Προαίρεσις in Epictetus' *Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1991) p.134

parts of the chain of causes which could interfere with our prevent our actions, even the movement of our own bodies. Rather, he urges us to pursue what really belongs to us, those things which are *idia*, since they are within our power, by which he means our mental faculties and their cognitive improvement. In Chapter 3 we shall consider the implications of this restriction for Epictetus' psychology and his view of the self as the object of self-control and self-development.

As far as the reliability of Arrian's testimony is concerned, I have taken him entirely at his word in the introductory epistle. Most of the technical terms which I have investigated are pervasive in the text, and there seems no reason to doubt that they were characteristic of Epictetus.

Chapter 1: *Prohairesis* in Epictetus — a new definition of the end and good for man.

1.1.1 Even the most casual reader of Epictetus cannot fail to notice the frequency and importance of the term *prohairesis*. which is used, as we shall see, to describe a wide variety of the functions and activities of the human soul. Furthermore, it is the *prohairesis* which, Epictetus tells us, is to be valued above all things; it is, in its ideal state the 'best thing' (1.18.8) and, at least potentially, the 'most authoritative thing' in a man. Significantly, it is as a development of *prohairesis* that an appropriate moral life is set out:

> 'Where therefore is progress? If one of you, having withdrawn from things outwith himself, and having turned himself towards his own *prohairesis*, works at it and slaves over it, so as to make it completely in accordance with nature: high, free, unhindered, unfettered, reliable and self-respecting.' (1.4.18)

'Living in accordance with nature' or 'in agreement with nature' was the great *telos*-formula of the Stoics (Diogenes Laërtius 7.87-9). Such a life was only possible to one who had achieved 'wisdom' or 'virtue'. It was to such a condition, a state or disposition of the governing-principle of the soul, that the Stoic aspired. His aim was to be a 'wise man' and the wise man lived according to nature. This state, when achieved, was the 'good' for man. Epictetus sets out the good, as well as the end of man in terms of *prohairesis*:

> 'In the same way, if you seek of me what is the good of man, I can say nothing else to you other than that it is some kind of *prohairesis.*' (or 'some quality of *prohairesis*', 1.8.16)

Where the Stoic tradition offers a state of the ***hêgemonikon***, the 'governing-principle' of the soul, Epictetus here offers a formulation which uses *prohairesis* as the basis of 'the good'. The ***hêgemonikon*** is fundamental to the Stoic psychology: it is the governing part of the wholly material soul, which is opposed to any immaterial, 'spiritual', source of consciousness, and it is the place where the Stoic mind receives and processes the 'impression' (*phantasia*), the response to which lies at the core of all mental activity. For Epictetus to use *prohairesis* in the manner which is referred

to above requires either that *prohairesis* will supplant the *hêgemonikon* or that it should be intimately connected to it.

The first of these suggestions may be rejected at once. Epictetus refers frequently to the *hêgemonikon* and accords it the same primacy which it holds in the earlier Stoics[1]. More plausible is the suggestion that the *prohairesis* is connected to, or is in some way an aspect of, the *hêgemonikon*, and shares in its activities[2]. This would seem to be confirmed by the close association of *prohairesis* with the 'use of impressions' (eg. 1.30.3). The exercise of *prohairesis* lies in response to impressions, a central feature of the Stoic psychology (DL 7.49). Every psychological function in the Stoic system could be reduced to an 'assent', and the source of all our actions was those assents which were to an impression which implied an active response, which the Stoics called 'impulses' (*hormai*).

These 'impulses', along with other responses to impressions, such as 'rejections' (*aphormai*), 'appetences' (*orexeis*) and 'aversions' (*ekkliseis*) are under the supervision, Epictetus tells us, of the 'faculty which uses impressions' (1.1.12), identified with the 'rational faculty' (1.1.4-6). This could be inferred with ease from the teaching of the early Stoics, that all these functions are 'assents' and thus responses to impressions[3]. But Epictetus introduces the additional notion that *prohairesis* has some controlling rôle. This association is best demonstrated from 2.23. At §7 the faculties of sight and hearing are subject to the 'faculty which makes use of impressions' which can pass judgements upon all things (§8). However, in §§10-11 we are further told that these faculties are governed by the 'prohairetic faculty'. The difference (if there be any) between these two faculties seems to lie in the 'prohairetic faculty' having a more 'moral', as it were, emphasis. It does not

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[1] eg. 1.26.15 where understanding the state of one's *hêgemonikon* is the 'beginning of philosophy', 3.10.16 where one is to be concerned with it rather than 'externals', and 4.4.43, where in terms familiar to the earlier Stoics, he insists it is to be maintained 'in accordance with nature'. cf. J. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge 1969) p.229

[2] So both the *hêgemonikon* and the *prohairesis* are to be 'maintained according to nature' and 'purified': 2.23.40 & *Ench.* 13 (*prohairesis*); 4.5.6 & 3.21.3 (*hêgemonikon*).

[3] Plutarch *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 1037f.

simply control sight, or be informed by it, but also determines whether the eye is to be turned upon an appropriate object, such as another man's wife (§12). The prohairetic faculty seems therefore to be a description of the 'rational faculty' or 'faculty which uses impressions' when it acts as a moral agent.

From §§16 onwards we find another slight shift in Epictetus' presentation of the work of this faculty. Moral functions and decisions and the control of our moral activities are attributed to *prohairesis*. No apparent distinction is made between *prohairesis* and the 'prohairetic faculty'. At the end of §19 Epictetus tells us that *prohairesis* is the 'only vice and the only virtue'. But the next section begins with the statement 'Since it is such a great *faculty* (*dynamis*)...'. In this context it is clear that *prohairesis*, while apparently an dispositional state, is also capable of being described as a 'power' or 'faculty'. As we shall see, Epictetus does not seem to go to great lengths to distinguish between this dispositional state and its underlying power or faculty.

By virtue of its rationality it is self-contemplative, a feature upon which Epictetus places great emphasis (1.1.4; 2.23.6); it is this feature which enables it to control other faculties and activities of the soul. At 1.17.1, Epictetus insists that, since reason analyzes all things, it must also analyze itself, since otherwise there would be an infinite regress. Reason is thus established as the superior faculty. At 1.20.1-5 we find a further elaboration of this argument. All arts and faculties have an object of contemplation. But they are self-contemplative if their object is of the same nature as themselves. This is true of reason, since reason is give to us for the use of impressions, and it itself is composed of impressions of a certain kind.

So it is this faculty which is also that which exercises impulse and rejection, appetence and aversion and which in itself sums up, or links together (*haplôs*) these activities (1.1.12). It is the responsibility of this faculty to work for its own improvement, to 'use impressions' in order to make judgements about its own worth and the worth of those indifferent things around it in the world, and it is in this self-contemplation and making of judgements that lies the purification which will bring the soul to the state which is the end of man (2.21.15; 4.11.7).

The picture which Epictetus draws therefore of the 'faculty which uses impressions' is one which seems to be fundamentally orthodox within the Stoic

tradition: a picture which shows a rational faculty responding to impressions and issuing forth in various types of 'assent' to impressions. It would seem clear that *prohairesis*, stemming from a 'prohairetic faculty', itself takes the form of response to such impressions. What is interesting about *prohairesis*, and what makes it relevant to the question of the end and good for man is that it seems to absorb into itself some, if not all of the functions carried out by the 'rational faculty' or 'faculty which uses impressions'. It is this over-arching rôle which, we must presume, enables Epictetus to tell us that the most significant human functions are, in a sense, summed up in the action of the *prohairesis*: that the good for man is a certain type, or state of *prohairesis*.

1.1.2. The most striking use of *prohairesis* in Epictetus is the way in which he defines two 'domains' of human interest: separating those things which are 'within the domain of the *prohairesis*' (*prohairetika*) and those which are 'outwith the domain of the *prohairesis* (*aprohaireta* eg. 1.30.3). L.S.J. offer 'purposive' and 'concerning purpose' for *prohairetikos* and 'without set purpose' or 'not deliberate' for *aprohairetos*[4]. These translations would seem to imply that the domain of things concerned with the *prohairesis* contains the equipment by which we use it: the mind, the 'prohairetic faculty' itself. Likewise the domain of things not concerning the *prohairesis*. Elsewhere, however, we are urged by Epictetus to aim at (*pros*) the *prohairetika* (1.4.1), which seems to suggests that the things which fall into this categories can be seen as the *aims* or *goals* of *prohairesis*. This ambiguity need not necessarily be attributed to carelessness on Epictetus' part. As we shall see, it is a fundamental feature of Epictetus' creed that that which is within our power (and therefore the *object* of *prohairesis*), is restricted to the exercise of our mental processes themselves.

These two domains correspond exactly to those things which are, according to Epictetus, within and outwith our power (2.5.4). More especially, he insists that the human good can only lie in those things which are within the domain of the *pro-*

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[4] although 'not under the control of the will' is offered for a citation in Marcus Aurelius, which may be relevant to this discussion.

hairesis and likewise its evil (1.20.15; 4.10.8). Those things which lie outwith the domain of the *prohairesis* are by definition indifferents (1.9.13; 1.30.3; 2.16.1). They can neither be good nor evil to us. This *dihairesis* is, as many commentators have observed, absolutely central to Epictetus' moral teaching. Everything which it is necessary to do to achieve our moral good is achievable by us. Likewise everything which we cannot achieve or avoid is to be regarded as being of no consequence to our true good or evil (1.20.12; 1.29.25).

Epictetus devotes much time to the elaboration of this creed, how it requires great mental control of our wants and desires if we are to avoid the inevitable frustration which arises from the failure to achieve that which is not achievable:

> 'If, even once, you say, "O when might one go to Athens!", then you are lost. For necessity requires that this appetence will make you miserable if it be unfulfilled, and if it be fulfilled, then it will make you empty and exultant over things that ought not to have that effect. Again, if you are hindered, then you will be unfortunate falling into things which you do not want' 4.4.35; 4.1.83-4; *Ench.* 2.1).

Since the 'promise' of appetence (*orexis*) is to succeed in achieving its object (*Ench.* 2.1), Epictetus insists that is to be directed only towards those things which are within our power (and thus *prohairetika*), and likewise aversion (*ekklisis*) (1.4.1). Indeed, Epictetus suggests that we should exclude or defer *orexis* altogether, lest we be in error about what are its proper objects and thus be led into frustration and passion (*ibid.*; *Ench.* 2.2). Learning to regard as indifferent that which is indifferent is one of the central lessons of philosophy, and learning to discern the domain of good and evil from the domain of indifference is crucial to this (4.1.83). The realisation that our true human good lies only in those things which are within our power is also in the nature of a 'conversion'; it is the beginning of a process of progress towards the elimination of passions arising from frustrated wants and the better state of the soul (1.4.18). Epictetus follows the early Stoics in insisting that it is this state of serenity and freedom which constitutes virtue. This 'progress' in eliminating the desire for things outwith the domain of *prohairesis* is, so Epictetus tells us, 'progress towards virtue', which is in turn progress towards the states of mind of serenity (*euroia*) and passionlessness (*apatheia*) (1.4.2-3).

1.1.3 What is most striking about the idea of the two 'domains', however, is the very division of things which fall into them. Within the domain of the *prohairesis* are the *prohairesis* itself and its corresponding activities, the activities of the governing-principle of the soul (*hêgemonikon*):

> 'The nature of the good is in the use of impressions and the nature of evil likewise, but the things outwith the domain of the *prohairesis* admit the nature neither of evil nor of good' (2.1.4)

Outwith this domain, as well as things such as worldly goods and reputation (1.30.2), is the body itself, its health and activities (3.10.18). A clear division is drawn between the life of the soul, which admits the good, and that of the body which is indifferent to us (3.10.18). When Epictetus tells us that there are three things belonging to man, soul, body and things external, and that the soul is superior because its goods are superior, he makes a particular point that the goods of the soul are *prohairetika* (3.7.2-6). This is not new in Stoicism, but Epictetus emphasises the distinction far more than most. Furthermore, Epictetus not only distinguishes the domain of the *prohairesis* from the body as something in the other domain, but actually distinguishes the *prohairesis* itself from the body[5]. The *prohairesis* thus is shown not simply to be an activity, an exercise of reason, but something with existence in its own right: an aspect or state of the soul which can in some contexts stand for the soul, or more particularly the *hêgemonikon*. Just as the *hêgemonikon* is to be 'purified' from inappropriate judgements (4.11.5-8; 2.21.15), and maintained in accordance with nature (1.15.5; 3.6.3-4; 3.10.11), so the *prohairesis*.

If this is the case, *prohairesis*, being connected with the 'rational faculty' should also be closely related to *logos*: Epictetus, like all Stoics, insists that Reason

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[5] So, at 2.22.19, he tells us that our inclination will lie where we imagine our self to be (where we place the 'I'). The self can be identified with the flesh, with externals and with the *prohairesis*. cf. also 3.1.41: 'You are neither flesh, nor hair, but *prohairesis*. We shall consider Epictetus' identification of the self with *prohairesis* in greater detail in a later chapter.

distinguishes man from animals (1.3.3; 2.10.2; 3.1.26)[6] and is the feature which he has in common with God (1.3.3). But Epictetus goes as far as to say that we are 'fragments' of God (2.8.11). The earlier Stoics had insisted that the human soul was a fragment of the cosmos (DL 7.143), an inference from their doctrine that the whole material world had, immanent within it, the *pneuma* which was God and Right Reason (DL 7.147; [Aëtius] 1.7,33 = *SVF.* 2.1027). This immanent reason shaped and formed the world and connected it together in one system, through what the Stoics called *sympatheia*[7]. Epictetus tells us that our souls and bodies are part of this system (1.14.5-6; 2.5.25; *Fr.*3). His account, however, is more striking since he insists that our souls are fragments of God, and that it is from this fact that we derive our kinship with him and the imperative to live in accordance with that shared rational nature (2.8.11-12; cf. 1.3.1 for God as 'father'). It is the 'faculty which uses impressions' which, Epictetus tells us, is the 'gift of God' and 'part of himself' which he has given us to be the locus of our freedom (1.1.12; cf. 1.17.26-7).

As we have seen, the good is 'some kind of *prohairesis*'. Yet the *substance* of the good is Reason, and especially Right Reason (*orthos logos* eg. 2.8.2-3) which is equivalent to the nature of God. So, we are told, it is through the 'use of impressions' that God is happy (*Fr.*4). Our happiness, the happiness of that most important part of us, derives its nature therefore from its being part of him. The question which must arise here is that of whether the substance of good is reason in the sense that it must be in the rational sphere, or whether in fact the exercise of *prohairesis* is a good itself.

This good state is brought about, Epictetus tells us, by the 'purification' of our judgements (*dogmata*) (2.21.15; 3.3.18; 3.4.4; 4.1.112 etc.) . Thus the 'intellectual' nature of the soul's development which was such a feature of the Stoic system is re-emphasised by Epictetus. Judgements are the cause of the passions which disturb the soul and throw it out of joint, making it difficult for our mind to function properly

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[6] cf. 1.6.15, where it is the 'faculty of understanding' (*parakolouthêtikê dynamis*). Animals can use impressions, Epictetus tells us, but not 'with understanding'. This 'understanding' must be equivalent to 'using impressions rationally' (3.1.25).

[7] cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias *de Mixtione* p.226 = *SVF.* 2.475; Sextus *M.* 9.78

and recover its equilibrium (3.19.3). By contrast, our judgements, if they are good, will make the *prohairesis* good. We act upon our own *prohairesis* by the way in which we 'use impressions' in order to make it more in conformity with nature: it is this feature which it gains from being self-contemplative. It is not surprising, therefore, when we find that Epictetus occasionally seems to imply that the judgements, when taken collectively, are equivalent to the *prohairesis* itself. When we are compelled, it is not an external force which compels us, but our own judgement about the external force which made us think it something to be feared. Epictetus tells us that 'judgement compelled judgement, that is to say that *prohairesis* compelled *prohairesis*' (1.17.26). A man is where his judgements are (3.2.12), an identification of judgements with the seat of the self, something which Epictetus characteristically applies to *prohairesis*. Likewise 'paying attention' to the self involves the use of impressions according to nature (3.16.15). A picture emerges of *prohairesis*, not simply as an individual act of choice or intention, but as an ongoing state of mind which can alter itself according to the way that it acts upon itself in acting upon the world around it, and thereby represents the intellectual and moral state that the individual soul finds itself in. It is this description of the *prohairesis* or 'faculty which uses impressions' as a dispositional state or faculty which will give us a framework for the further consideration of its significance.

1.2.1 As we observed in the previous section, it is through Epictetus' description of *prohairesis* as a faculty (*dynamis*), especially in 2.23, that we are able to link it so closely with the 'use of impressions' and show it to be central to our psychological and moral activity, since the 'faculty which uses impressions' is also the faculty which governs such functions as impulse and appetence (1.1.7). In order to pursue this further, we shall have to consider what it means for the Stoics, and particularly Epictetus, to refer to a 'faculty'. In Hellenistic times, the term faculty had come to be associated with the three divisions of the soul's activities which are central to the Platonic psychology: the 'rational' (*logikon*), 'spirited' (*thymoeides*) and 'desiring' (*epithymêtikon*) (*Rep.* 436a-441c). It is notoriously true of the Stoics, however, that they reduced all psychological activity to a single material soul of eight parts[8], of which the most significant, the *hêgemonikon*, or governing-principle, is the locus of all the rational functions which are then carried out by the subject parts of the soul.

Since the source of what we know about the Stoic view of faculty is largely Platonic and late, the possibility of confusion arises between different conceptions of what faculty is. Care must be taken as to whether what is reported is the Stoic account according to its own terminology, or according to the terminology favoured by the author. This becomes apparent when we contrast two different sources with reference to the number of faculties which the Stoics permitted. The Peripatetic commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias insists that the Stoics only allowed one faculty of the soul:

> 'It must be demonstrated that it is not the case that the faculty of the soul is a single one, so that the same faculty disposed in a particular way at some times thinks (*dianoeisthai*), sometimes exercises appetence, sometimes desires, by turns.' (*de Anima libri mantissa*, p. 118.6 Bruns = *SVF.* 2.823.)

The neo-platonist Iamblichus, on the other hand, appears to give a different picture of the Stoic view of faculty:

> 'Those who follow Zeno have a definite opinion of the soul as being of eight parts, attached to which there are many faculties, just as

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[8] In addition to the *hêgemonikon* or governing principle, the eight parts consist of the five senses and the faculties of speech and reproduction. ([Aëtius] 4.21.1-4 = *SVF.* 2.836).

in the hêgemonikon subsist *phantasia*, assent, impulse and reason.' (*de anima* ap. Stob. *Ecl.* 1.369.6.)

Iamblichus asserts that according to the Stoics there are at least four faculties within the *hêgemonikon* itself. Galen, like Alexander, tells us that there is one faculty of the soul, but his context shows us something important about what Alexander may mean:

> 'But because what is said in this book (where he says that the virtues are qualities) is at odds with his (sc. Posidonius) positing that a single faculty exists in the soul which is called the rational and critical faculty, thus taking away the desiring and spiriting faculties, as Chrysippus takes them away, one might blame him for this.' (Galen *PHP* 7 (206.583 M) = *SVF.* 3.259.)

In other words, we are here to understand by faculty, the Platonic idea of a tripartite soul which has three completely separate faculties or parts which are affected in different ways, and have different moral statuses, since only one of these is rational in the fullest sense and the others derive their moral status from the extent to which the are subject to the rational faculty. Chrysippus, (and all the other Stoics) thus had a single faculty in the important sense that he did not accept the existence of these 'lower' faculties, but rather argued for the existence of a single soul which was capable of rationality throughout, rather than having parts which were by nature irrational. Thus, considered in *Platonic* terms, Chrysippus did postulate a single faculty of the soul and it is in these terms which the Alexander passage has to be seen. It refers to rationality, appetence and desire, the Platonic 'faculties', and the point that is clearly being made is that the Stoics intellectualised the whole of ethics: the 'irrational' aspects of our nature are not the result of irrational parts of our soul, but rather of faults in the rational activity of the soul as a whole[9], and thus, for the Stoics, it is inappropriate to call spirit and desire 'faculties' in the Platonic sense.

However, we must also try to account for the view which is attributed to the Stoics by Iamblichus. It is elaborated elsewhere in the material in Stobaeus. At 1.367.10ff, Iamblichus describes the position of Plato and Aristotle on the subsistence

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[9] cf. Plut. *Virt.Mor.* 441c; Stein 1.119.

of faculties in the soul, pointing out that neither of them believed that faculties existed in different ways in different parts of the soul. This is contrasted with the position of the Stoics:

> 'But the philosophers who follow Zeno and Chrysippus and all those who reckon the soul to be body, infer that there are faculties, as it were qualities in the substrate and the soul to be a substance prepared as substrate for the faculties and from both these unlike things bring together a combined nature. In this nature are the faculties of the soul considered of itself or of the animal possessing soul considered in conjunction with the body, according to those people for whom the soul lives a double life: by itself and with the body, and the faculties are present in the soul in one way and in the animal in conjunction with the body in another, as in Plato and Pythagoras. On the other hand, according to those for whom there is one life of the soul: that of the combination of the soul mixed together with the body, as the Stoics say, or giving its life to the animal joined together with the body, as the Peripatetics assert in opposition: according to them there is one kind of presence <of the faculties>, shared by or mixed with the whole animal.
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> How is this to be distinguished? According to the Stoics, some (faculties) by difference of the substrate bodies; for they say that *pneumata* extend from the *hêgemonikon* here and there, some to the eyes, some to the ears, some to the other sense-organs; other faculties are distinguished by peculiar qualification, attached to the same substrate; thus the apple has in the same body sweetness and fragrance, likewise the *hêgemonikon* can include within itself *phantasia*, assent, impulse and reason. According to the Aristotelians, and those who think that the soul is partless, faculties are distinguished according to substance in accordance with the forms of the things they are able to make. According to Plato, it is said in some places that the soul is tri-partite, ie. in different substances in three kinds of life, and elsewhere that it is many-facultied, but does not differ from life in substance;

being distinguished in the substance of life by many peculiar characteristics. And altogether, part differs from faculty in the following way: part is a difference of substance; faculty provides a generative and creative distinction in the same.' (Iamb. *de anima.* apud Stob. *Ecl.* 1.367.17 - 369.4 W.)

What this suggests to us about the Stoic position is that they distinguished two kinds of 'faculties' of the soul (unlike the Platonists and Pythagoreans, who distinguished between the activity of faculties of the soul considered *per se* and considered in operation in conjunction with the body and its parts). The Stoics insist on 'a single life of the soul': it is assumed that the activity of the faculties of the soul have their consequences in the soul's interaction with the body (the soul itself is a body), and has to be considered in this light. Since the life of the soul is a single life with that of the body, it is necessary that the nature of faculties must be determined by the physical pneumatic substrate in which they exist. However, the existence of variety of mental experience must be explained. The Stoics thus explain this by the unique substance which the *hêgemonikon* is: hence the distinction between the faculties of the *hêgemonikon* and the soul as a whole.

The first of these two kinds of faculty was connected to the idea that there is some kind of functional power which appertained to each of the 'parts' of the soul. Thus, when one perceives by the process of *pneuma* oscillating between the *hêgemonikon* and the sense-organ, the process which is in action is one which is a *dynamis* of that part of the soul[10]: it is connected with the physical substrate itself, and it differs from other 'faculties' insofar as a different substrate would be required for them to operate in their several ways. The second view is connected with the *hêgemonikon* only. The faculties which exist within the governing principle of the soul exist within the same substrate like particular qualities. It is possible for more than

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[10] Bonhöffer seems to be right in maintaining that 'soul parts' are not so much *in* organs as the space between them and the *hêgemonikon* (*Epictet*...p.99). They are *pneumata* cf. Nemesius *Nat. Hom.* 176 (p.57, Morani) where *aisthêsis* is a *pneuma noëron*.

one faculty, understood in this way, to exist in the same substrate (eg. virtues)[11], and the *hêgemonikon* is the right kind of substrate for this kind of faculty. These faculties represent the variety of activities which are the work of reason. All actions of the 7Stoic mind are, as was always insisted, actions of Reason (*logos*). So, for example, impulse is 'reason prescribing to action', it is a rational judgement, an assent to a rational impression, not only that something is to be done, but actually instructing the body to perform an action. So the fact that one of the four 'faculties' found in Iamblichus' account is itself 'reason' does not necessarily imply either that the other three are irrational, nor that reason is only one faculty among many. Rather, as A.A. Long points out, reason is the 'mode of the whole soul's operation'[12].

1.2.2 The *hêgemonikon* admits a variety of different 'faculties' within its range of activities, but all of these have a single uniting principle: at any one time, when we exercise one of these faculties, we are exercising reason. It is at this point that we can find a connection between the view of the faculties of the soul in the early Stoics with that which we find in Epictetus. We have already suggested that the 'faculty which uses impressions', or *prohairesis* is a faculty which represents the activity of the *hêgemonikon* considered as a whole. In this section we shall consider in more detail what Epictetus makes of the idea of a faculty, to what extent it corresponds to the framework of the earlier Stoa, and what light it sheds on *prohairesis* as Epictetus uses that term.

Nowhere, it seems, does Epictetus mention *parts* of the soul, but there are frequent references to faculties, and it is clear from these that Epictetus uses the term *dynamis* to refer to those faculties which are in Stoic terminology as a whole, as far as we can tell from the evidence considered above, connected with 'parts' of the soul, eg. the senses (1.6.4; 1.8.15, 1.12.30), speech (2.23.14) and a *dynamis* which makes

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[11] According to Plutarch *Virt. Mor.* 441c, the Stoics considered virtue to be a 'faculty engendered by reason' as well as a disposition.

[12] 'Soul and Body in Stoicism', *Protocol of the 30th Colloquy of the Centre for Hermeneutical Studies* (Berkeley 1980) p.14.

use of the genital organs (1.6.8). So far he has been quite consistent with the usage of those Stoics referred to by Iamblichus, where the functions of the parts of the soul can be regarded as 'faculties'. In addition, in Epictetus, we find that faculties are linked conceptually with various skills (1.20.1 cf. 1.1.1ff), each 'faculty' having its own particular 'subject-matter' (1.20.1), an area of human life over which it has *dokimasia* (1.1.2), that is to say that it controls our responses to that area of life at a basic level.

However, as we have observed, the *prohairesis* is the most significant thing to be called a faculty by Epictetus. Its rôle is to govern the other faculties:

> 'But they (sc. the faculties of sight and hearing) are ordained as servants and slaves to obey the one which uses the impressions. And if you were to inquire how much each one is worth, of which do you ask? Who will answer you? How, then, can any faculty be greater than the one which uses the rest as servants and judges each and declares judgement? Which of them knows what it is and what it is worth? Which of them knows when one ought to use it and when not? Which is the one which opens and closes the eyes and turns them away from what they ought and towards what they ought? the faculty of sight? No, the faculty of *prohairesis*. What is the one which opens and closes the ears? What is the one in accordance with which we are interested in all things and inquisitive or again unshakeable by reason? Is it the faculty of hearing? No, it is the faculty of *prohairesis*. When this faculty sees that is stands among other faculties which are blind and deaf and unable to see anything except the very tasks to which they have been ordained to serve it and obey it, while it alone sees sharply and oversees the others, how much each is worth, and itself also, will it declare any judgement to us other than that it itself is the most powerful?' (2.23.7-11).

Thus the senses present external data to the *hêgemonikon*, but it is the *prohairesis* which then processes ('makes use of') the impressions. In this passage, we see the *prohairesis* being aware from its position of oversight that it is the superior faculty and controls the others, but Epictetus goes on to tell us that in addition to

judging its worth relative to the others, it also judges how the other faculties should operate, and what should be the consequence of the information which it receives:

> 'And what does the eye do, once opened, but see? But if it should see someone else's wife, and how, what faculty tells it? The prohairetic. And whether it ought to believe what is said to it, or disbelieve, or, if it does believe, whether it ought to be aroused or not, which faculty will tell it? Surely it is the prohairetic.' (*ibid.* 12-13)

So the prohairetic faculty is at the centre of our sensory and mental life, and the use of impressions constitutes our response to the information which the sensory faculties supply us. Also subject to *prohairesis* in the same way are faculties which involve activities in response to impressions, such as that of speech (*ibid.* 27-8), and also what might be called 'bodies of knowledge' such as grammar and music (1.1.3).

Epictetus tells us that each faculty has its own area of *dokimasia*. So, at 1.1.2, for example, grammar has concern for, or 'contemplates' what is written, and likewise, music concerns itself with melody. However, lacking the 'self-contemplative' quality of the rational or prohairetic faculty, they have no ability to see their place in the whole of our rational activity, they cannot tell us whether or how they should be used. This ability is unique, according to Epictetus, to the faculty which contemplates both itself and everything else: the faculty which 'uses impressions'. In other words, the other faculties in the *hêgemonikon* are simply bodies of knowledge or skills which enable one to pursue, at 'first-order' level, particular tasks, but not to make moral, or strategic judgements about their activities. This would require the ability to weigh up conflicting claims, which requires the ability to rationally use all impressions and not simply those which have a particular relevance (1.1.4).

In addition, the faculty which uses impressions is also the faculty which exercises other significant psychological functions:

> 'But since I (sc. God) could not give you this (control of the body), we have given you a part of ourself, this faculty of impulse and rejection and appetence and aversion, and altogether that which makes use of impressions, which, if you care for it and place all things belonging to you in it, you will never be prevented or held back, you will never groan blame or flatter anyone.' (1.1.12)

What is significant here is the fact that it is, according to Epictetus the same faculty which exercises impulse and other functions, which at the same time is the 'faculty which uses impressions'. Although there is a sense in which these functions can be seen as faculties separately, it is nonetheless the 'faculty which uses impressions' which acts when we exercise impulse. This overarching faculty acts, therefore, *qua* the hormetic faculty when we exercise impulse and these other functions (4.4.28). This corresponds, therefore to what we observed about the nature of the *hêgemonikon* in the testimony about the early Stoa. In addition to the existence of faculties in the lower parts of the soul which assist the *hêgemonikon* in its exercise of the mind, it is possible for functions, which are referred to as faculties to exist together in the *hêgemonikon*, representing the variety of our observable psychological experience, but at the same time being the operations of the same mind or consciousness, the same 'faculty which uses impressions' (1.14.7-8).

This ability to combine together our mental processes into a single faculty in this way is a feature which Epictetus believes to be a uniquely human (and divine) feature which distinguishes us from animals (3.1.25). Animals, we are told, have the faculty of using impressions, but not the faculty of doing so with 'understanding' (*parakolouthêsis*). So the donkey can walk around thanks to the capacity it has. It can avoid obstacles and move towards apparent food, but it cannot reason out reasons for moving at a particular time or have priorities in its actions, since it cannot mentally co-ordinate all its activities. Animals can eat, drink, rest and reproduce (1.6.14), but God has given human beings the 'faculty of understanding' (*parakolouthêtikê dynamis*) in order that we will act 'appropriately, in a measured fashion and following our own particular nature and constitution' (*ibid.* 15). This requires that we be able, unlike the animals, to understand and 'distinguish' (*diakrinein*) impressions:

> 'Of this kind is the constitution of the intellect (*dianoia*), according to which, when we hit upon the objects of sense, we are not simply impressed by them, but we pick out something, and subtract and add and combine these very things through them, and, by Zeus move from some of them to others which are related in some way; are these not enough to stir up people and convert them towards not leaving out the artificer' (1.6.10)

The ultimate aim of this ability, says Epictetus, is that we may be spectators and interpreters of God and his works (1.6,19; 1.14.7). One of our tasks is so to observe the world that we can see its moral governance at work. It is to this end that we have been given faculties (*aphormai*) from God. (4.7.7). While our *dynamis* in this regard is not so great as that of God (1.14.11), it is nevertheless the same in kind, a point which will be seen to be significant in a later section of the chapter.

1.2.3 As we have seen, the faculty which makes use of impressions is able to pass judgement upon itself and upon the other faculties (1.1.6). It is the ability to contemplate itself which is what Epictetus continually emphasises as the key feature of the faculties related to *prohairesis*. It is because it contemplates both itself and other things[13] that it has its central rôle. Epictetus insists that every art (*technê*) and faculty investigates certain particular objects (1.20.1). It can only be self-contemplative if the object is of the same kind as the faculty itself. This, according to Epictetus, is a quality which belongs only to what in this chapter he calls *logos*:

> 'Why, then, has reason been received from nature? For the right use of impressions. What is reason then? A combination (*systêma*) of a certain kind of impressions. Thus by its nature it comes to be contemplative of itself.' (1.20.5)

Its purpose is the 'proper use of impressions', a task to which it is suited as being composed of a certain kind of impressions. These impressions must surely be the 'cognitive impressions' (*phantasiai katalêptikai*), which, in the Stoic epistemology, were the criterion of knowledge. It is in respect of reason's being composed of such impressions, that it is able to use impressions which come to it properly, and to aim for the *telos* implied in the expression 'proper use of impressions'. Likewise, Epictetus insisted that the reason must contemplate all things and itself, since otherwise there would be an infinite regress: without a self-contemplating faculty, every faculty would contemplate something and nothing would contemplate the whole.

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[13] External things (that is external to our mind itself) are 'material' for the *prohairesis*; that is to say that the *prohairesis* exercises itself by making judgements *about* the external things and it is these judgements which bring about changes and development in the *prohairesis*.

Reason, being manifestly the best thing of all, must be the self-contemplative faculty (1.17.1).

This account of reason and the rational faculty propounds that this faculty is a 'system' of impressions. In other words it is something which is open to development according to its reception and processing of these impressions themselves. To add to and classify the impressions in the 'system' is part of the process of using impressions which the faculty applies itself to. So, the task of the philosopher is to test impressions (*dokimazein*) and to discriminate between them (*diakrinein* 1.20.7). We have met both of these terms before. *Dokimasia*, we saw, is the authoritative position of judgement which the prohairetic faculty had over lesser faculties, and those lesser faculties over their subject matter. *Diakrisis* was the ability to distinguish impressions which the rational soul possessed and which the animal soul lacked, involving processes of taking impressions together, comparing them and abstracting relevant information (1.14.7-8). It is impressions which have undergone this process which we can then 'apply' (*prospheresthai*). Epictetus compares this process to the art of assaying coinage (1.20.8-11). The assayer gradually learns to distinguish good and bad coinage by its sound: it is a *technê*. So, if we are careful in the way in which we use impressions to develop our rational faculty, and pay attention to the appropriate *diakrisis* we shall not go wrong. The rational faculty, or reason, stands in a position of authority over the impressions which go to make it up, and that position requires that it act responsibly in doing so. By the way in which we use impressions, we are acting upon the very faculty which uses the impressions in the first place.

1.2.4 We can see a parallel to this account in the early Stoic account of the development of knowledge. Sextus Empiricus tells us that the Stoics defended the idea that truth was corporeal on the grounds that it is knowledge (*epistêmê*) which is the hêgemonikon disposed (*pôs echon*) in the same way as the fist is a hand disposed (*PH* 2.81). The context here is the discussion of how 'truth' (*alêtheia*) is different from 'the true' (*to alêthes*; cf. also *M.* 7.41ff.)[14]: they differ in composition, says Sextus, because the true is simple in form, whereas truth 'is composed, (*synistatai*) of many

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[14] The 'true', by contrast, being merely a predicate, is incorporeal.

cognitions (*gnôseis*) (*PH.* 2.82. *M.* 7.237; cf. Watson, *Stoic Theory of Knowledge* pp.45-6). Likewise, among the definitions of knowledge used by the earlier Stoics were that it was a '*systêma* of cognitions' and a '*systêma* of pieces of knowledge (*epistêmai*)' (Stob. 2.73.19ff.[15]). A '*systêma*' in the *hêgemonikon* is a construct of impressions and cognitions, which are alterations of the *hêgemonikon.* Sextus emphasises that the Stoics considered cognition, (along with assent and impulse) to be alterations in the *hêgemonikon* in a different sense from mere impressions (*M.* 7.237). Impressions, he says, are mere passive alterations, whereas these other functions, which involve assent, are 'more like activities' (*energeiai*). So these latter are more significant changes in the *hêgemonikon*: they are the ones which the *hêgemonikon* makes itself, and are thus the 'impressions and cognitions' which go to make up knowledge, the ultimate state of the *hêgemonikon*'s self-development.

Epictetus elaborates this view of reason as a faculty by his analysis of the development of faculties:

> 'Every disposition (*hexis*) and faculty (*dynamis*) is held together and strengthened by the corresponding actions; that of walking by walking, that of running by running' (2.18.1).

He goes on to tell us that if we wish to do something we should make it dispositional (*hektikon*). He tells us that 'in matters of the soul' also the same principle applies, for example, when we are angry we have strengthened the *hexis* as well as being angry on the given occasion. The conclusion, thus, is that:

> 'It is impossible not to be the case that some dispositions and faculties which had never existed before, should come into being from the corresponding actions, and others be extended and made stronger'

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[15] The third of the definitions offered by Stobaeus is that knowledge is a disposition to receive impressions which is unshakeable by reason and which lies 'in tension and faculty'. 'Tension' refers to the fact that dispositions of the soul varied in tension, and that it was one of the features of the perfect dispositions which constituted wisdom and knowledge that they had the highest possible tension: the higher the tension, the better the state. The reference to this disposition being 'in faculty' is obscure, but shows that the Stoic idea of a faculty was related to variable dispositions of this kind, something confirmed by Epictetus' account of the 'strengthening' of faculties and dispositions (2.18.1).

(2.18.7)[16]

Epictetus is primarily concerned here with passions; he is seeking to emphasise that assent to an impression which leads to a passion leads to a state of mind which can be worsened by further yielding to the same kind of impression. The account, however, shows more generally the nature of faculties of the soul. A faculty is brought into being and developed by a corresponding action. In the case of the faculties of the mind, this is the exercise of the mind itself, the 'use of impressions', which leads to that 'cognition', which, for the Stoics was an alteration of the *hêgemonikon* itself: a change in our state of mind. So, Epictetus' insistence that the beginning of progress is to withdraw from externals and to look in on oneself and work at the *prohairesis* (1.4.18). How we use impressions to improve the state of such faculties becomes clear later in the chapter. We are not to allow an impression to carry us away, but rather to 'to bring up against it a beautiful and noble impression', and it is to this we are to assent[17].

We have discovered, in this section, that the Stoics can conceive of a variety of mental functions (faculties) taking place within the mind or soul, which notwithstanding can also be described as the work of a single rational consciousness: itself a 'rational faculty'. Epictetus chooses to call this consciousness *prohairesis* or 'use of

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[16] This is a cognitive activity, as the context shows: it is the function of reason, as Epictetus insists, to still the passion, by making a correct judgement, instead of the incorrect one of which the passion consisted.

[17] It is in this context that Albrecht Dihle sees 'an strong element of sheer volition' in Epictetus' account of *prohairesis* (*The Theory of the Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley 1982) p.60), while accepting that the 'intellectualistic element' predominates. However, Dihle's assumption that Epictetus' belief that what we 'will' in the *prohairesis* does not necessarily lead to action, is based on a mistaken belief about what Epictetus places in the categories of within and outwith our power, as we shall see in due course. More to the point, the question of 'voluntarist' rather than 'intellectualist' elements in Stoic psychology seems to be something of a red herring, as Jaap Mansfeld points out (' The Idea of the Will in Chrysippus, Posidonius and Galen' *BACAP* VII, 1991 pp. 115-6), the Stoic notion was that there was 'strength' in the 'tension' of the soul in Stoicism: a strength based on the making of judgements, and one which could be *eutonia* (Galen *PHP.* IV 6.5-6 = *SVF.* 3.473)

cf. also Rist *op. cit.* p.228-9 for refutation of the false distinction between 'intellectualist' and 'volitional' accounts of Epictetus' *prohairesis*.

impressions', and our human capacity to be conscious in this way a 'power' or 'faculty' of using impressions. The distinction between the consciousness or disposition and the faculty which underlies it is not sharply delineated by Epictetus, but since the better the state of the soul, the better we can exercise the power or faculty, it seems to follow that they are both subject to the same cognitive improvement.

Thus it is in connection with the 'prohairetic faculty' that we find one of the formulations of the 'end'. The highest of all things is not the faculty of speaking, but 'the prohairetic faculty, when ever it becomes *right* (*orthê*)' (2.23.27). This connects not only with the notion of right *prohairesis* or right use of impressions which we find elsewhere in Epictetus, but also with the 'right reason' which is the perfect state of the *hêgemonikon* in the early Stoa and equivalent to wisdom. The prohairetic faculty, or *prohairesis*, then, seems to be the equivalent in Epictetus of Reason in the earlier Stoics: that is to say that it is a feature or state of the *hêgemonikon* which is characteristic of that part of the soul, and consequently is its 'faculty', although allowing for other faculties to exist within it. It is, in Long's terms, the rational soul's mode of operation. As a faculty it is also something which can be improved and developed, and thus plays a rôle in our understanding of, for example, the 'purity' of the soul, which we shall consider in greater detail in a subsequent section.

1.3.1 In the previous section, we saw that the *prohairesis*, and the 'use of impressions', aim at the development of our rational nature: the development of reason, or the rational faculty, as a system of impressions. By 'using' impressions, we acted upon a faculty which was itself composed of impressions:

> 'First, therefore, you ought to make your *hêgemonikon* pure and adopt this as your determined position (*enstasis*): "Now my own mind (*dianoia*) is my material (*hylê*), just as wood is to a carpenter or hides to a shoemaker. Meanwhile my task (*ergon*) is the right use of impressions' (3.22.19-20).

This is a development of the 'best' aspect of our nature; the aspect by which we are distinguished from irrational animals (1.3.1ff), and so development in this aspect is represented as the end or goal of human life. As we observed, Epictetus' definition of moral progress (*prokopê*) is as follows:

> 'Where therefore is progress? If one of you, having withdrawn from things outwith himself, and turned himself to his own *prohairesis*, works at it and slaves over it, so as to make it completely in accordance with nature: high, free, unhindered, unfettered, reliable and self-respecting.' (1.4.18)

The prerequisite of moral development is a form of self-examination and self-improvement which concentrates upon the *prohairesis*, at the expense of that which is external to the self. The adjectives used here to describe the state at which we aim, 'high, free, unhindered, unfettered, faithful and blameless', show the attributes which the *prohairesis* should have as a result of this process. As well as being morally correct both in its state and its actions, it is to be free and unhindered in its own domain.

At this stage, however, we may pay particular attention to the association of the development of the state of the *prohairesis* with the fundamental Stoic moral formula: 'in accordance with nature'[18]. This stands as the end or goal of the development of this aspect of life and is a description of the state which lies at this end.

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[18] '*σύμφωνον τῇ φύσει*', usually expressed in the early Stoa, and elsewhere in Epictetus, as *κατα φύσιν*, or *ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει*.

Conformity with nature was absolutely central to Stoic ethical theory (Stobaeus *Ecl.* 2.77,16-27 = (*SVF.* 3.16); Diogenes Laërtius 7.87-9), alluding as it did to the monistic unity of their system where ethics was closely bound in with both physics and theology. God, according to the Stoics, is the active principle in the world, equated with nature (DL 7.135-6) and giving form to the substance of the universe (Alexander *De Mixtione* 225.1-2 = *SVF.* 2.310), and man's ethical aim is to submit himself thereto and live in accordance with it[19]. Nature determined the moral as well as the physical universe; everything was for the best, it was held, even if, at times, it did not appear so from an individual perspective. The Stoics assumed that moral principles were, if not exactly observable facts about the nature of the world, nonetheless such that it was possible to discern how nature intended that one should live according to its nature, as one reflected upon the world around one[20].

This is one of the functions of the Stoics' well-known doctrine of *oikeiôsis*, or 'appropriation'. The *locus classicus* is found in Diogenes Laërtius. Diogenes tells us that nature disposes every individual, whether animal or rational human, in the initial stages of life towards its own constitution (DL 7.85). In the rational life of the human being, this further commits one to a process of development in which we become increasingly conscious of our social position and corresponding duties and to a parallel process of intellectual development in which the predisposition is replaced by reason, which, from about the fourteenth year onwards, determines our moral and intellectual state and the assents to impressions which derive from it[21]. So the life according to nature for the rational being is the rational life[22]. Diogenes then continues to outline

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[19] DL 7.87-8. cf. also Plutarch *St.Rep* 1035c-d where the importance of the study of physics for the understanding of ethics is emphasised because the nature of the world is what determines what good and evil actually are. As Stein (*Psychologie der Stoa* Berlin 1886, 2.97) points out, this gives '...a strong basis for ethics, without the need for mysticism or transcendental speculation'

[20] cf. Seneca *Ep.* 120,3-5 where he explains how we acquire this knowledge not directly, but by analogy.

[21] cf. Cic *Fin.* 3.16ff. for the detailed account of this process which is omitted by Diogenes.

[22] DL 7.86. cf. B.L. Hijmans, 'Epictetus and the Teleological Explanation of Nature', *PACA.* 2 (1959), p.21.

what the aim of life is for this mature rational agent:

> 'For this reason, Zeno was the first, in his *On the nature of Man*, to say that the end is 'to live in harmony with nature', which is to say, living according to virtue. Likewise, Cleanthes also in his *On Pleasure* and Posidonius and Hecato in their respective treatises *On Ends*. Again, living according to virtue is the same as living in accordance with the experience of the events of nature, as Chrysippus says in his *On Ends*; for our natures are parts of the whole. For this reason, the end becomes to live following nature, which is to live according to our own nature and the nature of all things, not acting in ways which the common law tends to reject, that is to say the right reason (*orthos logos*) which goes through all things, which is the same as Zeus himself, governor of the dispensation of existent things. This is also the virtue of the happy man and the smooth flow of life, whenever all things are done according to the harmony of the *daemon* alongside every man, with a view to the will of the ruler of the universe. Thus Diogenes explicitly says that the end is to be rational in the selection of things according to nature. Archedemus says that it is to live performing all duties.' (DL 7.88)

We should note the equivalence of 'virtue' with the end. Although the Stoics accepted that virtue could be divided into specific 'virtues' which related to areas of human life, they nonetheless assumed that 'virtue', in the strictest definition of the term, was essentially having one's whole life[23] 'according to nature', both in terms of being entirely at one with the universe and its regular patterns, but more especially with the way in which human life fitted into these patterns, which are summed up in Right Reason: God contains within himself his own Law. This Law is not some obscurantist code which has no actual bearing on human life: it is the world and the events within the world as they happen and exhibit regularity: we actually *experience*

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[23] By which we do not mean 'whole life' in the sense in which Aristotle might have understood it: that is to say the aggregate of felicity and virtue throughout one's life, but rather having every aspect of one's life at one particular time in accordance with virtue. cf. Plut. *St.rep.* 1042a

the laws of nature at work as the events which they govern take place. We, in turn, in some sense both participate and submit to these patterns of events and believe them to be the 'best of all possible worlds'. Virtue, then, is an activity, but more especially, it is a disposition of the soul[24]:

> 'Virtue is a harmonious disposition (*diathesin homologoumenên*) and worthy of choice for its own sake and not because of fear or hope or one of the external things; happiness lies in it, due to its being the soul made to be in some state towards agreement with the whole of life. The rational soul is perverted, sometimes because of the persuasiveness of external affairs, sometimes because of the influence of companions; since nature gives unperverted starting-points.' (*ibid.* 89. cf. Sextus *M.* 9.22-6 = *SVF.* 3.75.)

The Stoic account here of the end of human life looks at it in two ways: as a manner of living which is according to nature, and as a state (virtue), which is according to nature. These are two aspects of the same reality, it is being in the state of virtue which allows one to live according to nature (hence it is also 'living according to virtue'), and likewise, we come to a state of virtue by means of 'following nature', by setting it as the guide to thought and action and thereby developing one's ability to conform one's reason to 'right reason'. Combined with the doctrine that the reason is changed and developed essentially by the reception of and response to impressions (eg. Sextus *M.* 7.237), we can begin to see the framework of Stoic doctrine upon which Epictetus bases his insistence that progress towards the end is a development of the state and activity of the *prohairesis*[25]

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[24] It looks as though this short passage follows on from Chrysippus, who is the main subject of this chapter, rather than Cleanthes, who appears to be in parenthesis, but the teaching itself is not materially affected either way.

[25] At 2.23.19 *prohairesis* is said by Epictetus to be the 'only virtue and the only vice'. cf. R. Dobbin '*Προαίρεσις* in Epictetus', *Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1991) p.134:

> 'It follows that προαίρεσις has virtually replaced ἀρετή in his version of Stoicism, as it has replaced λόγος. Unlike ἀρετή, it is a neutral term, since, as moral character it can be either good or bad, and so its use tends to generalize the lessons of the old Stoa.'.

This 'neutrality' of which Dobbin speaks, will, as we shall see, be of considerable

1.3.2 Just as Chrysippus and the earlier Stoics had stressed 'following nature' as the end, so Epictetus tells us that it is to 'follow the gods, and the substance of the good is the use of impressions as they ought to be used' (1.20.15, cf. 1.30.3). This formula is ascribed by him to Zeno, and although it refers to 'use of impressions', an expression which does not have any currency among the earlier Stoics, it nonetheless represents and authentic view of what was required of the man who would be wise. God and Nature are, after all, identical throughout the history of the Stoa. The emphasis is placed both on the perfect divine norm to which one aspires and the means by which it is to be achieved.

Taking first the idea of a divine norm, we find that this idea is elaborated most by Epictetus in his discussion of the 'good' and the good for man. While, for a Stoic, it is the case that the 'end' and the 'good' for man or any other creature are alike, it is the latter formulation which is found most in Epictetus. The two ideas are linked, as we saw from the citation of Zeno, and again at 1.30.3, where we are told that the Good lies in a good *prohairesis* and the proper use of impressions and that the 'end' is to follow God. However the metaphysical, as it were, link, is found in a number of places where Epictetus sets out the 'substance' (*ousia*) of good:

> 'God is beneficial; but the good is also beneficial. It is reasonable, therefore, that where is the substance of God, there will be that of good. What is the substance of God? Flesh? Certainly not. Land? Certainly not. Reputation? Certainly not. Intellect, Knowledge, Right Reason (2.8.1-2; cf. 1.22.16).

Epictetus goes on to elaborate that the good must lie in something rational, since it cannot be that which belongs to mere animals and plants, and that it requires the proper use of impressions (*ibid.* 4). The substance of the good lies in the divine *pneuma* which pervades the world[26], and thus man's capacity for good lies in the part

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value to Epictetus in redefining Stoic ethics as something approachable by the *prokoptôn*.

[26] Diogenes Laërtius tells us that according to Zeno, Chrysippus and Posidonius the substance of God was the 'whole world (*kosmos*) and heaven'. However, this does

of him, the *hêgemonikon* and its rational faculties, which is most like this substance. However, Epictetus emphasises that this itself is merely a *capacity* for good. The good *for man*, by contrast, lies in 'a good *prohairesis* and the use of impressions *as they ought*':

> 'In the same way, if you seek of me what is the good of man, I can say nothing else to you other than that it is some kind of *prohairesis*.'[27]

Hence the association with the end: it is in the *achievement* of perfect rationality, not in the *possession* of rationality itself that human good lies (2.1.4). So, elsewhere, Epictetus tells us that the substance of the good is 'right reason' (*orthos logos*), and the '*right* use of impressions'[28].

So the good — and end — for man lies in conforming that part of us which has the capacity for good, because of its likeness to God, being a partial example of what he is[29], to the good by making it qualitatively like him. It follows, therefore, that since few if any achieve the end, the condition of most of mankind is having this capacity tragically unfulfilled:

> 'For if the loss of the greatest things is the greatest harm, and the greatest thing within each man is the *prohairesis as it ought to be*, if someone is deprived of it, why do we still get annoyed at him?' (1.18.8)

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not contradict the definition offered by Epictetus. Elsewhere, we find that there is a threefold definition of *kosmos*: (i) as God who is a qualified being from all substance, (ii) The ordered arrangement of the stars, (iii) the combination of these two. In other words, the world is the substance of God inasmuch as God as the active element, reason, pervades it, and has the capacity to absorb all substance into himself at the 'conflagration' (7.137-8). So just as God is a peculiarly qualified object which contains all substance, he is also, in a further definition offered in the same passage, the one who peculiarly qualifies the substance involved (cf. Cicero *N.D.* 1.39).

[27] or 'some quality of *prohairesis*', (1.8.16)

[28] At 1.30.4, *prohairesis* 'as it ought to be' and the use of impressions likewise are described as goods (*agatha*).

[29] Bonhöffer is right to point out that, for Seneca, reason is the same for both men and gods (*Ep.* 92,27); *Epictet und die Stoa*, p.77). While for gods it is perfected, for man it is perfectible.

Epictetus thus insists that the nature of evil for man lies in the 'use of impressions' (3.24.2), as well as that of the good; evil is thus the state and activity of man whereby he uses impressions imperfectly. As we noted above, Epictetus tells us that we are happy in the same way that God is happy: by the right use of impressions (*Fr.*4). God uses impressions rightly as a matter of course, but inasmuch as we succeed in doing so, we shall be like him. While we shall never have a faculty *equal* to that of Zeus (1.14.11)[30] in terms of its *capability*, we can be equal to the gods in terms of the *quality* of the soul, by achieving perfection of rationality:

> 'Do you not know how small a part you are with regard to the whole? That is, in respect of the body, for in respect of reason you are not inferior to the gods, nor smaller; the greatness of reason is not determined by length or height, but by judgements (1.12.26).

By 'purifying our judgements': making right judgements to replace those which corrupt the mind[31], we will have a right view of all those things which come within our purview, those things of which we are capable, despite lacking divine omniscience, of forming appropriate judgements. The aim is to become of one mind with God (2.19.26, *Fr.* 4): to have one's mind disposed in the same perfectly rational way, while accepting the limitations of human rationality.

1.3.3 The underlying doctrine for Epictetus is that we (by which he means the ***hêgemonikon*** and its functions identified with the self: 2.10.1; 4.5.11[32]) are not only partial things of which God is the whole, but actually parts or fragments of God. The question might arise as to whether this simply means that, because of our shared rational nature, we are part of the overall activity of Right Reason, or whether we are in fact *substantially* parts of God[33]. We know that the earlier Stoics asserted that we

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[30] cf. Cicero *ND* 2.37 where man is 'not in any way perfect, but a little fragment of what is perfect'

[31] cf. Rist *op. cit.* p.228.

[32] cf. Colardeau *Étude sur Épictète* p.53.

[33] This latter was the view of Seneca, who insisted that 'Reason is nothing other than a part of the divine spirit plunged into a human body' (*Ep.* 66.12)

are fragments of the cosmos (DL 7.143)[34]. This is simply an explicit statement of what could be easily inferred from Stoic first principles: our souls and bodies are material things which are part of the material whole of the universe. However, Epictetus goes further than this: he insists that best part of us, the intellectual and moral centre of our being is a part of God, part of the all-pervasive rational element in the universe, which we have heard him describe as the substance of the good[35]. This depends on the idea of the difference in the degree of pervasion: the Stoics held that the *pneuma* which was the physical substance of the rational element pervaded some substances more than others (DL 7.138): the human *hêgemonikon* was pure *pneuma*, it was the most deeply pervaded, and thus was the best substance for rationality (*ibid.* 139)[36].

It is not surprising, therefore, that it is a version of this kind of argument which Epictetus actually uses in 1.14. The *titulus* of the chapter announces that it will concern the oversight of all men by 'the Divine'. Attention is drawn to the order of the universe, and especially by its *unity* (*hênôsthai*), which results in all things on

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[34] Rist *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge 1969), p.265, argues that the idea of the soul as an *apospasma* of the cosmos is not that the soul or any faculty of the soul is an *apospasma* even of the active or ruling element in the cosmos, but of the cosmos as a whole. If he is right in this, then, as we shall see, the position of Epictetus is quite significantly different.

[35] This is, of course, consistent with the identification with God which we observed as one of the definitions of the cosmos for the Stoics. Epictetus makes a point of clearly spelling out the particular definition which he wishes to use.

[36] cf. A.A. Long, *op. cit.* p.7:

> 'Referring to books by Chrysippus and Posidonius, he (Diogenes) observes that *nous* pervades every part of the cosmos just as soul pervades every part in us. "But through some parts more pervasive and through others less so: for it passes through some parts as *hexis* , as through the bones and sinews, but through others as *nous*, as through the *hêgemonikon*." The basis of this distinction is, of course, the Stoic concept of *pneuma* and differing degrees of tension which characterise its movement. Since the soul itself is *pneuma* and since *hexis* and *nous* are both functions of *pneuma* at different degrees of tension, it was possible for the Stoics to make soul responsible both for the form of the body (bones, sinews etc.) and for specific psychic attributes. They could only do this by distinguishing the soul as *hexis* (and as we shall see later, *physis*), from soul in a specific sense.

earth being 'in sympathy' with things in heaven. This reflects the Stoic doctrine by which all things are bound together by *sympatheia*: the connection between all states and events in the world which is the direct consequence of the pervasion by reason of all matter. However, Epictetus insists here that, while our bodies, like the plants, have a very close relation to the universe our souls have a much closer one. Our souls are bound up with God as parts (*moria*) and fragments (*apospasmata*) of him. God thus perceives every movement (*kinêma*) of the soul as it were a movement of himself.

It is worth pointing out at this point that Epictetus does not here assert a radical dualism — in fact, quite the reverse, he does not say that our souls are parts of God and *not* parts of the universe, but rather that they are 'so much more' (*poly pleon*) bound up with the universe by virtue of their relation with God. However, inasmuch as we, that is our souls, are parts of that which is the governing and determining element of the universe, we have a particular significance within it, we are 'things of importance' (*proêgoumena*), a quality lacked by all other things (2.8.10 cf. 2.10.3, where our ability to observe the governance of the universe is the reason for this status). God thus 'engineers' a part of himself (1.17.27) and 'gives' it to us: it is this which is the *prohairesis* or *hêgemonikon* (*ibid.* 26), and so he has 'constructed' us for a purpose: being happy (*eutychein*; 3.24.63). So the relationship with the human soul is a stronger one than that with other objects, a relationship which he elsewhere calls 'kinship' (1.9.11; 2.8.11).

The study of the 'constitution' or 'administration' (*dioikêsis*) of the universe, a task for which God created us, claims Epictetus, will yield the observation that the 'greatest and most authoritative and comprehensive of all things' is the *systêma* of men and gods (1.9.4; cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.64)[37]. We have met this term before in the sense of being an ordered arrangement of impressions making up reason. In this sense it is the ordered relationship of different persons which makes up a society for the

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[37] 'A *systêma* of men and gods' is also a definition of the universe attributed to Posidonius (DL 7.138)

benefit of the whole (Clem *Al. Strom.* 4.26 = *SVF.* 3.327)[38]. So, Epictetus tells us that we shall further observe that while the 'seeds'[39] have descended from God to all animal and plant life on earth, they are especially (*proêgoumenôs*) present to rational beings who alone have communion (*koinônein*) with God, since they are bound together with him through reason (*ibid.*)[40].

1.3.4 According to the Stoics, the wise man and God benefit (*ôpheleisthai*) each other by their virtue (Plutarch *Comm. Not.* 1076a). The virtuous acts of each have a beneficial effect on the other, by means of perception of their respective *kinêmata*[41]. 'Benefitting' is defined by the Stoics as 'being disposed according to virtue', and 'being benefitted' as 'being moved according to virtue' (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.95.3f = *SVF.* 3.94 cf. also DL 7.104). It is therefore something which is unique to the wise man and God — the non-wise man can neither benefit nor be benefitted (Stob. *ibid.*; Plut. *Comm. Not.* 1068a). Indeed, since the non-wise man is *kakos*, it must be assumed that what he causes is harm, since *blaptein* is defined as to 'move or be disposed according to vice'(*kakia*). It is from this doctrine that the Stoics derive their view that the man who harms another also harms himself (*St. Rep.* 1040de[42]). The inference, then, as Margaret Reesor points out[43] is that 'an occurrence, such as "thinking wisely" is related through cosmic sympathy to every other occurrence, and the virtue, the disposition which produces such an occurrence, with every virtue that produces a similar occurrence'.

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[38] Posidonius is reported as having appended the doctrine that all things in the universe were created for the benefit of men and gods (DL 7.138 cf. Cic *N.D.* 2.133; Gellius 7.1.1).

[39] A reference to the *spermatikos logos*, the aspect of reason that pervaded the world and gave form and life to it, according to the Stoics (DL 7.135-6).

[40] cf. Colardeau *Étude* p.241.

[41] Strictly speaking, 'when each comes upon (*tynchanêi*) the other while the latter is moving'.

[42] cf. M. Reesor 'The Stoic Wise Man' *BACAP* 5 (1989) p.110

[43] *op.cit.* p.108

As we observed above, Epictetus insists that God is able, through *sympatheia,* to perceive every motion of our souls, a fact which derives from their being parts and fragments of him. God, and the Good, are of course beneficial (*ôphelimos* 2.8.1), but what of man? It is clear from Epictetus that he, like his predecessors, regards the wise man, and consequently the man who benefits others, as a rare occurrence. However, it seems to be doctrine that, through *sympatheia*, individuals cause benefit or harm to one another, which lies behind a converse idea on which he lays great stress: that is that we are to recall, in the face of our thoughts and actions, that God is 'within' (1.14.13), and that ignorance of this relation leads to carelessness in our moral attitude (2.8.11)[44]. Since our souls are fragments of God, and thus we carry him within us, then everything which we do, even the most trivial things we do *ipso facto* to God (2.8.12). The inference of this, according to Epictetus, is that any thought or action on our part which is not in conformity with the Good will do ill to God. He speaks of 'defiling' the God within us (2.8.14); so the heightened sympathetic relation involved transmits our wrongdoing into a bad effect on the whole.

By way of digression, the question might be asked as to how the God, who is supposed to be completely blessed, can be harmed or defiled. This question does not in fact differ from the general question of the existence of evil in a world infallibly governed for the good by a divine providence with which the Stoics were often taxed by their critics (eg. Plutarch *St. Rep.* 1050cd). If a part of God, such as the soul of man, be in an imperfect state, then how can the whole be perfect? It is not absolutely clear what the Stoic solution to this problem was, but it may have involved some reflection on the question of part and whole. Parts are neither the same as wholes, nor entirely different: the hand is not the same as a whole man, but not entirely different, since the whole man is thought of including the hand (Sextus *M.* 11.22-6[45]). So Cicero tells us (*N.D.* 2.39), that man is not perfect, but a tiny fragment of what is

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[44] Epictetus reminds us at this point, by way of emphasis, that we are 'primary' (*proêgoumenon*).

[45] It may be relevant that the context of this passage is the relationship of a wise man with a non-wise man: while they cannot mutually benefit one another, the wise man's virtue is not an 'other than benefit' to his friend. This might be a model of our relationship with God.

perfect. To apply that argument to the problem in hand, this seems to be exploiting an ambiguity in the word 'imperfect', between imperfection as incompleteness, in respect of a greater whole, and imperfection as falling short of an ideal. Epictetus seems aware of this ambiguity at 1.14.10-11, when he speaks of our lacking the 'faculty' or 'capability' of Zeus to perceive and understand the entire working of the universe. Might it be the case that God, by virtue of this omniscience, is able to have an overall providential plan which takes account what are imperfections of individual parts of his being when considered *qua* individuals? If this were the case, it would then explain why Epictetus can retain his faith in God as good, and yet give moral relevance to our shortfallings. God can accommodate these within the good, but it is nonetheless in some sense 'better' that they should not be present.

While Epictetus does not shrink from the stark conclusion that the unwise man cannot benefit others, or God, he nonetheless recognizes the position of the man who is making progress, and allows that the relationship which he has with God as a rational being may play some rôle in his progress towards virtue. At 4.11.3, he informs us that it is the particular characteristic of the gods to be 'pure' (*katharoi*) and 'undefiled' (*akêratoi*), and so are attached to purity and cleanliness. However, while our substance (*ousia*) cannot be altogether pure, reason, which we have received from the gods, strives to be as pure as possible (4.11.4). This purity and its corresponding impurity, as we might expect, is that of the soul; Epictetus calls it the 'highest' purity (*ibid.* 5), and it comes about by the replacement of wicked judgements (*dogmata*) by judgements as they ought to be (*hoia dei*). This latter expression shows us clearly into what territory we have strayed. The good for man, we saw, lay in '*prohairesis hoia dei*' (1.18.8), or 'use of impressions *hoia dei*' (1.28.4). So the man who is making progress, who recognizes his need to purify his soul, is nonetheless able to use the divine presence within him as a reference-point towards this progress.

1.3.5 The relation with God is relevant, not only to the end of our activity, but also to our 'orientation', as it were, in respect of that end. Epictetus reminds us that we have two elements, the rational (*logos* and *gnômê*), which we share with God and the body which we share with animals. He stresses that we must incline towards one element or the other: we must judge that one or the other is the more significant and

the most distinctive of human life and the pursuit of the end (1.3.1ff). Since we are 'begotten of God', it is clear that it is the aspect of our nature which we share with him to which we ought to incline. The *prohairesis* is 'superior' to the flesh (2.23.22); it is the *dianoia*, the mind which is to be the material of our endeavour, and on this we should concentrate our energies[46]. As we have seen, Epictetus is not a dualist in the sense that he regards our souls as outwith the material universe, but he does regard the body and possessions as 'fetters' (1.9.11) inasmuch as the orientation of our desires towards them prevents the mind from acquiring the freedom that lies in the better state of the soul; the body is thus spoken of as 'little donkey' (4.1.80). We can see, then, the significance of the *dihairesis* between the things which belong to the *prohairesis* and those which do not to which we alluded in the introduction to the chapter. *Logos* and *gnômê* are the substance of God and the Good. Are we therefore going to concern ourselves with good and evil, the development of the *logos* and the *prohairesis*, or are we to be like the animals whose life consists only in eating and drinking and other bodily functions and thus for whom things indifferent to us are goods? These are completely separate domains, one of which leads us toward the fulfilment of the divine and therefore peculiarly human aspect of our nature — the Good — and the other which, by dint of its being concerned with external 'indifferents' rather than the domain of good and evil, where we can make progress towards the good leads us to living for matters of no real importance and thereby abandoning the true nature of man.

So Epictetus tells us that by 'giving up claim to things outwith the *prohairesis*' (4.4.39) we are surrendering to God and to fortune. That is to say that by rejecting the view that externals are the source of good and evil, we are submitting to the 'proper' view of our nature which is consistent with our divine begetting. As we shall see in the next chapter, it is also a submission to divine providence, by recognizing that which is truly within our power and not yearning after that which is beyond us (4.1.102). So we are to 'make use' of what is given us, while retaining this proper perspective on its true value (2.16.28). While indifferents cannot be good or evil, the careless 'use' of them is an evil: it is an improper judgement about them which

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[46] It is our *ergon* (3.22.20)

damages the state of the *prohairesis* (2.5.6f). Epictetus thus connects the idea of having the right ideas about the gods and obeying them, with withdrawing our idea of good and evil from those things which are not within our power and placing it in the things which are (*Ench.* 31).

Epictetus thus places great stress on the contemplation of the nature of God and the universe, which is God's 'dispensation' or 'governance' (*dioikêsis*) (4.1.99-100; 4.10.14). A proper understanding of the nature of good, the providential ordering of the universe, and one's place within it, is proof against the frustration that arises from valuing that which has no real value and which is not within our power to have. What is within our power, as we shall see in chapter 3, is the cultivation of the *prohairesis.*

This is the link, then between, on the one hand, the idea of the *prohairesis* as a faculty which has as its principle object the contemplation of itself and its own development and, on the other, its being, as the rational faculty of the soul, a part of the divine element in the universe. God is our standard: his perfectly rational nature represents the aim at which we aspire. As we seek to develop our *prohairesis* by the replacement of wicked judgements by right one's, we are seeking to conform to the entity which is Right Reason, whose judgements are, of themselves invariably right. Moreover, his activity is obvious to all who observe properly: his 'governance' in the world is clear and both visible and intelligible. Man has no excuse for not submitting and conforming to this dispensation.

1.4 In conclusion we can see that Epictetus uses *prohairesis* or the 'use of impressions' as a description of the overarching faculty of the *hêgemonikon* which oversees all our mental functions, to the extent that it is it which acts when these functions are exercised. In this respect, he uses these terms to refer to that which the earlier Stoics called 'reason'. The 'end' and 'good' for man is expressed as *prohairesis* as it ought to be, or 'right prohairesis', just as the earlier Stoics had spoken of Right Reason. The perfect state of the *prohairesis* is thus presented as an end, an end which can be reached by the cognitive improvement of the state of the *prohairesis*: the replacement of bad judgements by good ones. Epictetus, however, replaces 'virtue' or 'wisdom' as the characteristic formula for this end, with what is more clearly emphasised as the extreme point of a continuum of mental and moral development upon which we all stand at some point.

This cognitive improvement depends on another feature of the *prohairesis* to which we have seen Epictetus to be drawing attention: that it is self-reflecting. Unlike other mental functions and skills, the *prohairesis* or 'faculty which uses impressions' contemplates itself and acts upon itself, as well as controlling the other functions. This has two main consequences which we shall explore in subsequent chapters. In the first place, it clearly shows that Epictetus, like other Stoics believes us to have a unified mind or consciousness. In the second place, this unified mind is identifiable with the self. When we act upon the *prohairesis* by making new judgements to improve its state, we are acting upon ourselves.

Chapter 2. Prohairesis and Conative Functions

2.1.1 In the introductory section, we considered briefly the relationship between *prohairesis* or 'use of impressions' as a term for the activity of the *hêgemonikon* and such functions as impulse (*hormê*) and appetence (*orexis*), along with, for example, repulsion (*aphormê*), aversion (*ekklisis*)[1], preparation (*paraskeuê*), purposing (*epibolê*) and assent (*synkatathesis*) (4.11.6). With the exception of the last-mentioned, assent, these are what might be called 'conative' functions of the soul: through these functions the mind works to express our wants and desires and to initiate our actions[2]. Epictetus insists that these functions are governed by the 'faculty which uses impressions', or *prohairesis* (1.1.12, 4.1.74). By making this insistence, he concurs with the view of the Stoic school as a whole that there was no separate faculty of desire competing with our reason to determine our actions, but that we should look for the source of our impulses and appetences in the same place as our reason is found (4.11.26 cf. 3.22.31 & 33).

According to the Stoic doctrine, impulse was an assent to an impression (Philo *L.A.* 1.30; Plutarch *St. Rep.* 1057a[3]); specifically such an impression as would inspire an impulse, one which contains within it a command to action (*phantasia hormêtikê*, Stob. *Ecl.* 2.86.18). When the mind receives such an impression and assents to it, then the 'tensional power' (*tonikê dynamis*) — the dispositional state of the *hêgemonikon* which determines how we respond to impressions — 'reaches out' towards the external object of the impulse[4], and thereby, through the soul-parts

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[1] *aphormê* is a negative response, the correlative of *hormê*, and likewise, *ekklisis* of *orexis*. These four functions are often grouped together by Epictetus (eg. 2.8.29, 3.7.34), and are defined more clearly and discussed in greater detail than the others, each of which appears in some lists and not in others.

[2] We shall not discuss in detail the causation of our actions here, as it is the subject of the next chapter on that which is within our power.

[3] Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action* p.46.

[4] Stobaeus calls it a '*phora* of the mind (2.87.4) towards something in the domain of action'. The change which thus takes place is within the mind itself, though with reference to something external.

distributed throughout the body, causes the body to move in the appropriate way (Philo *L.A.* 1.30). Impulse, and specifically 'practical impulse', stands as the generic term for the conative functions of the soul, as being one of the four 'faculties' attributed to the *hêgemonikon* by Iamblichus (*ap.* Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.369.6), as is illustrated by the hierarchy of functions found in Arius Didymus (*ap.* Stobaeus *Ecl.* 2.87-8).

Epictetus' account of the conative functions, as we shall see, follows, in its most fundamental respects, the pattern of that of his predecessors. In the first place, in describing them as subject to the faculty which uses impressions, he concurs with the view that our conative functions operate in response to an impression:

> 'Which of you is able to exercise appetence or aversion or impulse or rejection, or prepare himself or plan, unless he take an impression of something gainful (*lysitelous*) or at least[5] appropriate. (*kathêkontos*)' (3.22.43)

Not only are impulse and appetence responses to impressions, but impressions of specific content. We are presented with ideas of appropriate or inappropriate conduct and must respond in the right way. Secondly, as the earlier Stoics had maintained, the response is a rational one: to use an impression 'rationally' or 'with understanding' involves the working of the mind towards assent, comparing competing impressions, both with each other, and with established preconceptions and judgements which the mind already contains (1.6.10).

Furthermore, this process of considering incoming impressions and judging their suitability to be the basis of a desire or action is done with reference to an end: the end of conforming to nature in all our thoughts and actions. A fragment of Musonius Rufus cited by Epictetus suggests that he agreed with his teacher that:

> 'But especially, in all things the function of nature is to bind together and harmonize *hormê* to the impression of the appropriate and

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[5] 'ἢ μὴ' must surely mean 'at least' in this context, rather than 'or not' as per Oldfather. While that which is not appropriate would be the object of rejection, the contrast here is between the advantageous in general, including 'the good' which is the object of appetence, and the appropriate which is the object of general impulse (*hormê*)

helpful.' (*Fr.* 6.2)

By using 'nature' as the criterion for determining the appropriate impressions for our conative responses, we are exercising impulse, appetence and the other functions 'in sympathy with nature' (1.4.14). As well as our using our knowledge of nature as a guide to how we use impressions in impulse and other functions, the state of our soul, inasmuch as it may be in accordance with nature, reflects in how our conative functions are exercised.

2.1.2 We observed at the end of the previous chapter (**1.3.4**) that one of the formulations of the pursuit of the end of human life in Epictetus was the 'purification' of the soul to match the purity of God or the gods. It is in this context that the list of functions of the soul cited above appears. It is in a part of God, the governing-part of the soul and its prohairetic faculty, that these functions subsist and are used (1.1.12). Epictetus is thus at pains to point out that while it is in respect of our carrying out these functions that impurity appears in the soul, the impurity itself lies in having the wrong sort of judgements (*ibid.* 8). Having a pure soul with the right kind of judgements (*hoia dei*) allows one to avoid 'confusion and pollution' in the exercise of these functions[6]. So the exercise of impulse, appetence, and the other functions listed here is dependent upon the state of the soul. This is in turn determined by the development of *prohairesis* through the systematic self-examination of the content of the mind, and the work which the mind carries out upon itself to improve this state (3.21.23). Exercising these functions involves the processing of impressions in such a way that 'judgements' about the right use of the functions and their objects develop. For the earlier Stoics, impulse, like other assents to impressions and cognitions, is a 'change' (*heteroiôsis*) in the *hêgemonikon* (Sextus *M.* 7.237[7]), and so, for

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[6] The use of conative functions when confused and polluted is described in a striking passage at 2.14.22:

> 'If you say to someone, "Your appetences are inflamed, your aversions are humiliating, your purposes are inconsistent, your impulses are out of harmony with nature, your suppositions are reckless and false", at once he goes out, saying, "He has insulted me"'.

[7] cf. Inwood *op. cit.* p.32.

Epictetus also, we can, by right or wrong use of the function, bring about a development or deterioration in the way in which the function will be used in the future.

In other words the dispositional state of the soul — how we have used impressions in the past — determines to a significant extent how we shall 'use' them when we exercise these conative functions. Stobaeus tells us that the term 'impulse', as well as being thought of as a *function* by the Stoics, could also refer to what might be described as an 'impulsive disposition' (*hexis hormêtikê*; *Ecl.* 2.87.11-12[8]). For Epictetus also, our impulses and appetences are an expression of the kind of person we are, and have made ourself, and the kind of judgements which we make to determine our impulses have consequences for that self-development (3.23.9). The 'work' (*ergon*) of virtue lies in impulse and appetence (1.4.11). So one aspect of progress towards virtue is correctly identifying good things as the object of appetence, evils as the object of aversion (1.4.1), and indifferents as being the suitable objects of neither of these functions. The *euroia* and *apatheia* which are promised by virtue (1.4.3) can only be achieved when we secure that which is the object of our appetence and successfully avoid that which we avert. The solution for the *prokoptôn* is the setting aside of appetence for a while, and the use of aversion only towards things within the domain of the *prohairesis* — but of this more anon: what is important here is that using impressions rightly with reference to appetence and aversion and the judgements which we are required to make about their proper objects is a significant part of the pursuit of virtue as our end and the states of mind which are the concomitant of the possession of virtue.

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[8] cf. Inwood *op. cit.* p.113.

2.2.1 In the previous chapter, we accounted for Epictetus employing *prohairesis* and 'use of impressions' as the terms for our rational psychological activity. This has certain consequences for the relative status of various functions and activities of the *hêgemonikon*. Instead of a hierarchy in which *prohairesis* was a sub-species of impulse, we find impulse as one of the functions which is subject to the *prohairesis*. This change in the relation between *prohairesis* and impulse raises the question of whether it still plays the rôle which it played in the early Stoa of being the genus-term even for our conative functions. If *prohairesis* is no longer a species of impulse, does it remain the case, for example, that *orexis* (a function of far greater apparent significance to Epictetus than to earlier Stoics) can be classified in this way? Appetence, in the early Stoa, was a 'form of rational impulse' (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.87.2) which aimed at the apparent good (along with hairesis and *boulêsis; ibid.* 98.2)[9], and so the *orekta* are *agatha* (ibid. 98.3). What this tells us is that when we exercise appetence, we are assenting to an impression which we have received whose propositional content is that Φ is an action to be carried out, and in addition, not only that the end or object of Φ is advantageous or appropriate for us, but that it is a good.

Epictetus concurs in the view that appetence aims at the good (3.3.2), but he does not explicitly say that it is an impulse, although, as we have remarked already, appetence and aversion are frequently grouped together with impulse and rejection. It has been argued that appetence is co-ordinate and parallel to impulse, rather than a species of it[10]. Most recently, Inwood outlines a view that by distinguishing sharply 'the good' from 'the appropriate' (*kathêkon*), Epictetus necessarily distinguishes appetence from what one might call 'general impulse' (*hormê*)[11], since otherwise he would be obliged to say that 'appetence is a kind of rational impulse to the appropriate'. While Inwood does not remark on the fact that, for Epictetus, *prohairesis* and 'use of impressions' act as generic terms for our psychological activity, he does

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[9] cf. Bonhöffer, *Epictet und die Stoa* p.235

[10] Voelke *L'idée de volonté*..., p.132; Inwood *Ethics and Human Action*... p.116.; M. Billerbeck, *Epiktet Vom Kynismus* (Leiden 1978) p.60.

[11] *op. cit.* 117

suppose the existence of such a term[12] which governs both impulse and appetence. However, since *prohairesis* has a wide sphere of influence, this still allows room for a generic term for conation.

One aspect of Epictetus' system which seems to support the view of Voelke and Inwood, are the three *topoi* which he introduces in a number of places. This is a division of philosophy, or of ethics, into three 'fields' or 'topics', each of which has a different subject matter, and each of which requires us to be trained in a different function:

> 'There are three fields, concerning which the man who would be fine and good must be trained — that concerning appetences and aversions, lest he not achieve his aim when he exercises appetence, nor fall into <that which he wishes to avert> when he exercises aversion; that concerning impulses and rejections, and altogether concerning duty, so that he may act in an orderly fashion, reasonably and not carelessly; the third is that concerning inability to be deceived and lack of rashness, and altogether, concerning assents.' (3.2.1-2; cf. also 2.17.15, 3.12.13, Fr. 27.2.)

Each of the topics concerns the use of a function of the *hêgemonikon* and, in respect of each of these functions, the *topos* consists in learning what the right and wrong use of the function is, and how to be successful in achieving the objects of the functions[13]. Whereas in the case of appetence, what is required is absolute success, in the case of impulse, all that is required is that its objects be pursued in an orderly, reasonable and careful manner (cf. esp 3.12.13). In the case of assent, what is significant is the avoidance of being deceived and of rashness (*eikaiotês*). These are typical requirements of assent in the Stoic tradition, and fully accord with other evidence which we have about proper assent — that one should take care that one does not assent to an impression which is not 'cognitive' (*katalêptikê*). In this section,

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[12] *op. cit.* pp.117-8 cf. Diagram B.

[13] P. Hadot supports the view that appetence and impulse are co-ordinate, by suggesting that the three *topoi* represent three functions of the *hêgemonikon*, used by Epictetus and Marcus, as opposed to two functions (assent and impulse) which he attributes to the earlier Stoics. (*La Citadèle Intérieure*, Paris 1992 p.145)

we shall consider the evidence for Epictetus view of appetence, impulse and assent, and whether in fact they are exclusive of one another.

In the case of assent, a difficulty arises immediately with respect to the hypothesis that the three *topoi* are co-ordinate functions: that is that, in the early Stoic tradition, all our conative functions, and impulse as the generic function, are assents to impressions. If this hypothesis is correct, then Epictetus must be departing from this doctrine in some way. It might be suggested that, if Epictetus is restricting impulse, as Inwood suggests, then likewise he might restrict 'assent' in some way, perhaps to the logical or theoretical sphere, a hypothesis which derives some plausibility from the examples given in 3.2.6 of the preoccupations of those young philosophers who rush to this sphere, ignoring the proper order: 'fallacies due to changes in the meaning of terms, inferences from question and answer, hypothetical arguments and 'Liar' syllogisms.'. However, such a restriction in the definition of assent would be a radical departure from the Stoic tradition for whom assent is the essential commitment to a received impression which underlies our thought and action. We shall devote the next few sections of this chapter to examining these questions in greater detail, and thereby seek to acquire some kind of insight into the operation of the *prohairesis* through its subject functions.

2.2.2 Appetence comes first in the schema, and we shall consider first how the term is used by Epictetus, looking in due course how it compares with the use of impulse in general. In order for appetence to achieve its aim it must have absolute success in achieving its objects; such is its *epangelia*, its 'promise' or 'undertaking':

> 'Remember that the undertaking of appetence is the achievement of that which one exercises appetence towards; the undertaking of aversion is not falling into that which one averts, and he who misses in his appetence is unfortunate and he who falls into that which he averts suffers misfortune. If you avert only those things which are contrary to nature among those which are within your power, you will fall into none of the things against which you avert; if you try to avert disease or death or poverty, you will suffer misfortune.' (*Ench.*2.1. cf. also 4.1.76. 4.4.35)

Appetence and aversion, lie first in the schema because their consequences, it would seem, are the most serious. If we succeed in achieving the aim of our appetence, then, provided that this appetence is properly directed, we achieve the good for man: the state of having the *prohairesis* as it ought to be with its concomitant advantages of passionlessness and serenity. If we fail, either by failing in the achievement of what is the object of our appetence, or by experiencing something which we wished to avert, then we shall fall into passion, since we are yearning for something which we cannot have, since it is outwith our power; the good being by definition within our power. Inwood is right, therefore, to point out (pp. 118-9) that Epictetus, in the schema of the three *topoi* places emphasis first on those things which might lead to passion.

Hence the idea of what is 'within our power' is particularly closely associated with appetence, aversion and their objects. Appetence is to be *akôlytos*, 'free from hindrance' (1.19.2); it should be so directed that nothing external to ourselves is able to interfere with our achievement of its aim. What is 'unhindered' is that category of things which are 'our own' (1.25.3-4), or 'distinctively ours' (*idia*, 2.13.8), which have been given to us by God to dispose of as we please[14]. By implication what is not our own, or is 'alien' (*allotria*, 2.13.8) is 'hindered', and we are warned not to lay claim to it.

As we shall see when we come to discuss the idea of what is within our power in the next chapter, this effectively means that appetence cannot properly have any objects external to the self (1.22.10ff cf. 4.10.5). If we do not have an appetence which is 'balanced' (*symmetros*), and aimed at *prohairetika* (that is, what is within our power) then the inevitable consequence will be desire (*epithymia*) and fear (4.1.84). Through appetence, Epictetus connects the idea of the good as an aim (and evil as a thing to be averted) with a particular strength of yearning (3.2.3). So the wrong kind

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[14] The use of the same word to describe both an activity or function and its object is of course characteristic of Epictetus, as we found when we examined the use of *prohairetika*.

of appetences are 'inflamed' or 'seething' (*phlegmainousin,* 2.14.22[15]). It is determined by nature that we shall be attracted by the apparent good when we perceive it, and the concomitant of this seems to be that the conative move that we make towards it will be of a particular force. Exercising appetence towards *aprohaireta* leads not only to passion, but in fact to giving way to *to alogon*, the irrational (4.1.84). The balance of the rational soul's adherence to reason and nature in its selection of activities is upset and we become 'disobedient to reason': which is the Stoic definition of irrationality and passion in the rational soul (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.88.8f).

2.2.3 The significant thing then, for Epictetus, as far as *orexis* and *ekklisis* are concerned is the importance of making the right judgement about what is the good and what is the 'undertaking' of appetence: being mistaken about this is one of the chief causes of our being in a passionate state[16]: it is judgements (*dogmata*) which are the principal cause of our being in a state of fear (2.16.22). Passions arise when that 'by which we exercise appetence, aversion, impulse and rejection' (the *hêgemonikon* 3.22.32)[17]. Hence his repeated insistence on the definition of the good as an appropriate state of our soul, and also on 'the things which are within our power (*eph'hêmin*) as a criterion for discerning the field in which the good lies (4.1.83), and therefore the appropriate objects of appetence (eg. 1.22.10). So, for example, we are not to approach a diviner with appetence or aversion (2.7.9-10), since anything which he can tell us about the future will be, in reality, indifferent, nor are we, when faced with a choice of two roads ahead, to exercise appetence towards either the right or the left (*ibid.*). Neither wealth (2.17.24) nor health are appropriate objects of appetence.

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[15] cf. the 'inflammation of passion' referred to by Origen (*Contra Celsum* 8.51 = *SVF* 3.474, p.125.1), which has to be overcome by the appropriate judgement or doctrine (*dogma*) about passion.

[16] Bonhöffer is right when he suggests that when Epictetus tells us that appetence is of 'goods' (1.4.1), he thereby does not mean goods in the 'strong Stoic sense':

> 'It is not so much that the object of *orexis* is a real good, so much as that each impression of a good must, according to the Stoic view, inspire *orexis*' (*op.cit.* p.239).

[17] We are to 'turn in on ourselves' to discover the nature of the good through our preconceptions (3.22.39).

This is the reasoning behind the frequent insistence on Epictetus' part that the *prokoptôn* should lay appetence aside during the initial stages of his progress (3.22.13)[18]. Until such time as he has completely mastered the skill of determining what is the appropriate object, and thus exercise appetence *eulogôs*, it would be risky for him to exercise it at all. The danger is that we might exercise appetence in such a way that it will be 'unfulfilled' (*atelês*[19]) and 'liable to failure' (*apoteuktikê*) (4.10.4; 1.4.11; it should therefore be *anapoteukton*, 2.8.29). In addition to the frustration which attaches to failing to acquire the object of appetence, Epictetus is concerned that on those occasions when we do acquire the wrong object of appetence, some external thing[20], we shall be 'puffed up over the wrong thing' (4.4.35). The success which we have had on that particular occasion (which cannot be guaranteed) will fuel a false judgement about the proper object of appetence, which will be dangerous in the future and hinder our development.

Aversion, by contrast, is not to be set aside; although it too can cause passion, when we fail to avert what we wish, it also seems to be involved in the avoidance of passion which is itself an evil to be averted. Its aim is 'not to fall into that which one averts' (*aperiptôton*; 2.8.29, 1.4.11), and so although its sphere is good and evil, its object is evil. While we might wait to embrace the good, true evils, the passions, must be dealt with at once if any other progress is to be made (3.22.13). It is presumably a less serious matter to mistake an indifferent from an evil, and thus avert it, than to mistake an indifferent for a good, but it is nonetheless an error (a passion, perhaps, of lesser intensity) and although Epictetus permits the *prokoptôn* to exercise

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[18] At 3.22.13, it appears that this practice of setting aside appetence is actually a part of the 'conversion', as it were, the turning from concern for externals towards the *prohairetika*, which marks the beginning of progress towards the end.

[19] This term is also used of 'planning' or 'purposing' (*epibolê*; 3.22.104; cf. Billerbeck *op. cit.* p.162), a function which is not so clearly defined by Epictetus (cf. discussion below in **1.4.6**), but does not seem to have the same immediacy or strength of yearning as that found in appetence.

[20] While Epictetus tells us that externals are not within our power, this has to be understood in the context of Epictetus' particular definition of what is within our power, which is that it is that which is *in all circumstances* within our power, and can never be frustrated by circumstances outwith ourselves (cf. cp. 2 below).

aversion, it is to be restricted to things within the domain of the *prohairesis*. We should not avert disease, death or poverty, since these are in the power of others and of fate, and concern the body which is not within our power and not the locus of the good (*Ench.* 2.1).

2.2.4 Impulse, and its opposite, rejection (*aphormê*,) differs from appetence according to Epictetus in its object or subject-matter, and in its intensity. While appetence was concerned with what the Stoics regarded as absolutes, 'goods', impulse, according to the schema which we noted earlier is concerned with 'duties' or 'natural functions' (*kathêkonta*) (2.8.29, 3.2.1-2)[21]. This term, which was of great significance in the Stoic account of natural ethics, requires a little explanation. In the early Stoic account 'duties' were the feature of man's moral activity which was determined by 'appropriation' (*oikeiôsis*), the belief that every creature was oriented by nature towards its own well-being (*ta oikeia*; DL 7.86) and, in the rational animal, towards a process of development of the mind which led to reason. Every creature had a 'first impulse' (*prôtê hormê*)[22], determined by nature through appropriation, which aimed at the creature's basic survival and the maintenance of its physical well-being:

> 'Initiis igitur ita constitutis, ut ea, quae secundum naturam sunt, ipsa propter se sumenda sint, contrariaque item reicienda, primum est officium (id enim appello καθῆκον) ut se conservet in naturae statu, deinceps ut ea teneat, quae secundum naturam sint, pellatque contraria...'. (Cicero *Fin.* 3.20f. cf. DL 7.85).

As reason developed in the rational human being, the mind replaced this instinctive impulse with the ability to select between different possible objects of impulse, a change which involved the assumption of moral responsibility, which is

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[21] Although 'the advantageous' (*sympheron*) seems to be the object of both appetence and impulse (1.18.2; 1.28.5).

[22] Impulse is the function which distinguishes animals from plants, just as reason distinguishes man from the animals (DL 7.86).

associated with reason (DL 7.85; Cic. *Fin.* 3.16; Sen *Ep.* 121.14[23]). Reason thus becomes the 'craftsman of impulse' (DL 7.86), and the proper object of impulse was the *kathêkon*[24]. This is the choice which was both 'in accordance with nature', and also according to the nature of the individual and his capacities (DL 7.89). These are the acts that reason, as it were, chooses to do, such as acting in the interests of family members friends or country (DL 7.108)[25]. A distinction was made between those dutiful actions which were simply the response of the rational but not completely wise man, and those which were undertaken by the wise man from a settled disposition, which were 'right actions' (*katorthômata*) (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.97)[26].

2.2.5 Epictetus' account of impulse recognizes a distinction between the pursuit of the good, and that of the *kathêkon*, which is the aim of impulse in our schema[27]. The good, Epictetus tells us, is to be preferred to every *oikeiotês* (3.3.5), that is to say those things in which we have an interest through *oikeiôsis* (Epictetus calls them '*koinônoi*' at 1.22.10): things and persons which are connected to our material and social well-being. So we are not to regard our father and brother and country as goods, but rather as indifferents (*ibid.*7).[28] Unlike appetence, therefore, this more

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[23] cf. Voelke *op. cit.* p.66

[24] the 'hormetic impression', to which one assented in the exercise of impulse, was an impulse 'of some duty' (Stob. *Ecl.* 86.18).

[25] Likewise there are acts which are contrary to duty, such as neglecting one's parents and country, and others which are not covered by the doctrine of *kathêkon*, such as picking up a twig, holding a stylus etc. (*ibid.*)

[26] Stob. 5.906,18-907,5 (= *SVF.* 3.510). So, *katorthômata* are done from 'right reason' (Stob. 2.96). In other words, they consist, as Stobaeus tells us, on the one hand of good dispositions of the soul, and also from doing ordinary things, such that assent to the impression that we ought to do them arises from a perfect disposition: thus we can 'walk about *phronimôs*' (*ibid.* 21) cf. 2.93,14-18, where it is emphasised that *katorthôma* is a species of *kathêkon*, but one which arises from a right disposition.

[27] cf. Inwood *op. cit.* p.117

[28] These relations (*scheseis*) are the 'measure of our duties' (2.10.7-12), and thus determine the extent of our duty to different kinds of people, depending on the

general impulse can have external objects:

> 'In a piece of relief work, what is the most important thing, the silver or the craft? The substance of the hand is the flesh, but the significant things (*proêgoumena*) are the works of the hand. [Duties, indeed, are of three kinds: those towards merely existing, those towards a particular quality of existence, and those which are the significant ones][29]. Likewise, in the case of people, it is not the material which is to be honoured, the little bits of flesh, but rather the significant things. What are they? Acting as a citizen, marrying, begetting children, honouring God, looking after one's children, and to sum up, exercising appetence, aversion, impulse and rejection in the way in which one should do all such things, that is to say as we are bound by nature.' (3.7.24-6)

The underlying idea is that external things are 'material for the *prohairesis*' (1.29.1ff) and in dealing with them we find our own proper good (2.5.1). Careless 'use' of externals by the *prohairesis* is an evil. So impulse itself is a matter of good and evil, since it is a *prohairetikon* (2.16.1), but its objects are not so[30]. How we conduct ourselves in the world is dependent then on seeing other people as the object of our benevolent behaviour (what Epictetus calls 'maintaining relations'), other people who are not goods in themselves. However, if the good lies in a right *prohair-esis*, then the maintenance of these relations is a good. Other people and their interests are not to be the object of *orexis*, being external to us and outwith our power, but we must exercise impulse towards the maintenance of our relations with them. In doing

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particular relation.

[29] Oldfather *ad loc.* and Bonhöffer *Ethik* 205f. point out that the interpolated passage interrupts the sense and seems, to be a marginal comment which might, nonetheless come from elsewhere in Epictetus. Bonhöffer's suggestion that it must be interpolated, since the first kind of duty is not specifically moral is perhaps misdirected: the point about the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiosis* as described by Cicero and Hierocles is exactly that even the first instinct to survival is, although not necessarily *intentional*, is nonetheless a *moral* action, since according to nature.

[30] Hence the 'significant things' mentioned in this passage involve appetence and aversion as well as impulse and rejection.

so we make the judgement that they are not the good — it is part of the way in which we 'use the impression' in exercising impulse — and this right judgement, which is what makes the difference between the response to the impression being an appetence or an impulse, will contribute towards our own good, the better state of the soul[31]. By virtue of these actions, as the passage cited above demonstrates, we are promoting our good by conforming ourselves more and more to nature.

So, while an impulse may have an external object, it is always to be understood that such an object cannot have the significance of the objects of the *proper* use of appetence. Like the earlier Stoics, Epictetus insists that impulse is to be exercised 'with reservation', that is to say that it is always to be accompanied by the judgement that its object cannot be assumed to be infallibly achievable in every circumstance, a provision which should avoid the frustration of human incapacity (Seneca *Ben.* 4.34.4). So the wise man is never frustrated, since he always exercises appetence, impulse and purpose with reservation[32]. Furthermore, reservation is connected with 'not over-tensing' (*aneimenôs*) in the exercise of impulse (*Ench.* 2.2), which shows the corresponding requirement not to allow impulse to become the kind of deep yearning which appetence naturally is.

We can see from this discussion that, as we noted above, impulse differs from appetence in two principal areas: in intensity, and in respect of the fact that it does not in all cases pursue the absolute good, but can be dependent upon time, place and 'proportion' (3.12.13). In addition, it seems that it must take account of our

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[31] So it is possible to maintain a relation (*anastrophê*) '*hoia dei*' 1.22.13, if we regard only those things within our power as goods.

[32] Inwood cites this passage in support of his view that appetence is co-ordinate, rather than subordinate to impulse (*op. cit.* p.125), since appetence, being aimed at the *known* good in Epictetus, is applied unreservedly: 'Only the pursuit of those things which are not in one's power, the "externals", requires reservation.'

This is true for Epictetus, as Inwood's evidence suggests. However, the fact that the difference between impulse and appetence is one of *intensity*, does not necessarily imply that appetence is not a species of impulse: as we suggest in this section, this difference in intensity derives from the presence or absence of the supplementary judgement which is the 'reservation'; it is, as we noted above, judgements about what is good or evil, within our outwith our power, which are the causes of our passions.

individual capacities. While both impulse and appetence are to be exercised 'according to nature' or 'in harmony with nature' (1.4.14, 1.21.2, 2.14.22, 2.24.19, 4.4.28), impulse is also to be exercised with reference to 'one's own nature' (1.21.2; cf. DL 7.89). This is an additional rather than an alternative requirement but it does illustrate further the different aims of the functions. Appetence is concerned with universal nature: there is only one good and only one good for man. Impulse, by contrast, having external things, rather than the good, as its object, has to take into account the particular capacities of the individual[33].

2.2.6 We may now return to the question which we introduced earlier, which is the relevance of the third *topos* to the relation between the *topoi*. This *topos*, we are told, is that concerned with 'assent'. For the earlier Stoics, assent had been the generic term for a positive response to an impression, a term which therefore embraced judgements, both practical and theoretical, and also conative functions such as impulse. With 'use of impressions' and *prohairesis* seeming to take over much of this generic rôle, it might be suggested that Epictetus restricts assent, in this context at least, to the theoretical sphere. This is clearly intended to reflect the use of the *topoi* as an order for approaching things in a programme of 'progress'. Epictetus makes it very clear that he regards a premature concentration on theoretical and logical matters, before the central ethical and theological propositions which govern one's approach to philosophy have been mastered, as a source of possible confusion and a diversion from the important preliminary stages (3.2.5-6).

If this were the case, then it would support the view that each of the three *topoi* concerns an independent function, and thus that impulse is not necessarily an 'assent', nor appetence an impulse. There appears to be an argument for this separation when one considers a number of passages in which 'assent' is listed among functions of the soul, such as impulse and appetence, but also purpose (*epibolê*) and planning (*prothesis*) (1.21.2, 2.8.29, 3.9.18). These passages would seem to place assent as co-ordinate to functions which, according to the early Stoic theory are

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[33] So knowing one's own 'capacity' or 'preparation' (*paraskeuê*), leads to one's exercising impulse towards the tasks which correspond to that capacity (4.8.41).

reducible and subordinate to assents, just as was contended with regard to appetence and impulse. This kind of listing is not unique to Epictetus, however. We found a similar question in respect of Iamblichus' account of four 'faculties' in the *hêgemonikon*: impression, assent, impulse and reason. Yet we know the Stoic doctrine concerning these functions: that all our mental activities are the work of reason, that impulses are assents to impressions, and that assents of particular kinds, namely cognitions go to make up reason. So it does not follow from Epictetus' listing assent along with functions which would be expected to be species of it, that they were not so in his system also.

Much then depends on the question of whether the third *topos* does in fact refer primarily to assent to theoretical propositions, and not to the usual definition of assent which includes all our definite responses to impressions. As we have seen, the accounts of the three *topoi* which stress their 'pedagogical' rôle seem to hint at this idea. Epictetus clearly intends that we should avoid sophistical discussions until we have disposed of our passions and learned to direct our conduct. So the third *topos* consists in 'not being deceived or rash' (3.2.2)[34]: not leaping into accepting some logical or other theoretical proposition until the mind has been sufficiently trained to make proper use of its faculties of discernment.

However, it is clear that for Epictetus 'assent' does not have this meaning in every circumstance. At 3.12.14, we are told that the third *topos* concerns assent, with regard to the plausible (*pithana*) and attractive (*helkystika*). The technique which this field teaches us is to examine every impression and not accept any impression unexamined (*ibid.* 15), but rather to 'wait' for the impression to allow the process of examination to discover whether it has the 'token from nature', that is to say whether or not it is a cognitive impression. This is the technique of 'waiting and testing' (4.20.1ff; *Ench.* 1.2): an important aspect of 'use of impressions' which is the underlying basic activity of the *hêgemonikon* according to Epictetus, and which governs impulse and appetence as well as other functions. Precipitate assent is connected with 'rash (*eikaia*) impulse' (3.22.104), which seems to suggest that a similar kind of response is inadvisable in both cases. Assent appears to be, as for the

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[34] At 2.8.29 assent is to be 'not precipitate' (*aproptôtos*).

earlier Stoics, a fundamental part of this process, and therefore it is difficult to see how it can be divorced from the functions described in the other *topoi*.

This is reinforced by a number of passages (1.17.22, 4.1.69, 4.4.13) where the *topoi* are not introduced in their 'pedagogical' order, but rather with the field of assent taken first as the exemplary field, and then one or other of the other two shown to be analogous to it. In 1.17, Epictetus is showing how the *prohairesis* is free from hindrance and necessity. He begins in the field of assent by telling us that '..in this sphere your have a *prohairetic* (capacity) which is unhindered, unnecessitated and unobstructed?' (§ 23). He goes on to say that in the fields of impulse and appetence the same principle applies: only an impulse can overcome an impulse and an appetence an appetence. This passage is significant in two respects: first it shows the functions associated with the *topoi* in their true logical order, demonstrating the theoretical development from the freedom of assent to the freedom of the other functions, rather than the 'pedagogical' order which is designed to help us progress at the practical level. Secondly, Epictetus insists that in all the various functions which are subject to *prohairesis*, it is 'judgement which compelled judgement, that is to say *prohairesis prohairesis*'. In other words, the exercise of each of these functions depends upon the making of a judgement, which must involve an assent to an impression.

2.2.7 The essential relation of assent to impulse is found more explicitly set in a similar passage at 4.1.68ff. Once again Epictetus tells us that just as our assent cannot be compelled or necessitated, so our impulse. However, he goes on:

> '"What then? What if I want (strictly, 'am impelled': *emou hormêsantos*) to walk around and the other person hinders me?" "What part of you does he hinder? Surely not your assent?". "No, but my body." "Yes, just as he would hinder a stone." "That's as may be, but I still do not walk about." "But who said to you, 'it is your part (*ergon*) to walk around unhindered'" "For my part I said this, that the only thing which was unhindered was the exercise of the impulse itself. Where there is need for the body and cooperation from it, you have heard before that nothing is yours"' (§§ 72-3)

Epictetus goes on to apply the same to *orexis*, *prothesis*, *epibolê*, and 'altogether (*haplôs*, again) the use of impressions that come to us.' Aside of the lesson about what is truly in our power, which we shall consider in greater detail in the next chapter, these sections show us that when we exercise impulse, or any other of the functions which are mentioned here, it is the assent to the impression which is the significant factor, and moreover, the factor which guarantees the freedom of the action (*Fr.* 9). This is particularly clear at 4.10.3ff where 'that which is within our power' is the criterion by which we judge whether or not to assent, and then, by analogy how we should use appetence. While we have seen above that all these functions are 'uses of impressions', we can now make the stronger statement that the use of impressions involved in exercising them requires an assent. While this in itself does not show appetence to be a species of impulse, as for the earlier Stoics, it does indicate that Epictetus' use of 'assent' does not imply that central functions of the three *topoi* are necessarily co-ordinate to and separate from one another.

This is confirmed by the view we find expressed in the opening sections of 1.18, where Epictetus expands on the claim, which he attributes to 'the philosophers', that there is a single 'starting-point' (*archê*) for all our psychological activity, the 'feeling that' (*paschein hoti*) something is the case:

> 'If it is true what is said by the philosophers, when they say that as for all men there is a single principle of assent in the feeling that something is so and in dissent the feeling that it is not so and in withholding judgment the feeling that it is unclear, so there is a single principle of impulse towards something, in the feeling that it is advantageous and that it is impossible to judge something to be expedient and still yearn for something else and judge one thing dutiful and be impelled towards something else — then if so, why are we any longer angry with the many?' (1.18.1-2)

In this passage, we find Epictetus insisting on the Stoic doctrine that impulse is an assent to an impression of a particular content: 'that something is advantageous'. The use of *paschein* in this context should not be confused with the 'passion'; the

term is also used, both by Epictetus[35] and the earlier Stoics[36] to refer to the preliminary response to an impression which is not fully within our power, as opposed to the assent which is entirely so[37]. The 'principle' of impulse may be the feeling that something is expedient, but what makes it happen is the 'judgement' (*krinein*). So one cannot judge something advantageous (*sympheron*) and yearn (*oregesthai*) for another, or judge something dutiful and be impelled towards something else[38]. The assent involved in the judgement underlies both appetence and impulse, but what is rather interesting is that, while Epictetus insists here that the dutiful is the object of impulse and the advantageous the object of appetence, he introduces the point with a general point that 'feeling' that something is advantageous is the 'principle' of *impulse*. What this seems to imply is the impression that something is advantageous brings about a preliminary change in us which tends towards inspiring impulse, but that our response may in fact be either an appetence or an impulse, depending on how we 'judge' (*krinein*) the matter, since it is the nature of the soul to be moved *orektikôs* only towards the good. The implication is that the 'advantageous' is a generic term which is the object of general impulse, as the earlier Stoics would have understood it (1.28.5; 1.18.2), and that just as the good and the appropriate would be species of it, so both appetence and simple impulse would be species of our response to it.

2.2.8 This only makes sense if Epictetus does adhere, as we suggested earlier, to the Stoic idea that appetence is a species of impulse, which in its turn is a species of

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[35] cf. 1.2.3, 28.3&13, 29.7, 2.15.7.

[36] [Aëtius] 4.12,1-5 = *SVF.* 2.54.

[37] DL 7.49:

> 'Impression comes first, then mind (*dianoia*) which has the capability of using language, expresses in a reasonable statement what it receives (*paschei*) from the impression.'

[38] cf. 3.3.2 where it is the nature of the soul to be attracted in a appetitive fashion (*orektikôs*) towards the good.

assent[39]. When the soul receives an impression such that it would inspire a conative response, it is our responsibility to assent to it properly: we must decide in the first place whether or not it is appropriate to assent to it[40], and then we must make the judgement which will determine the intensity of our response, a judgement which, in the case of impulse, will include the element which is called 'reservation'. If, however, we can convince ourselves that the object of the conation is not only a duty or advantage, but actually a genuine *good*, then we can allow our response to be an unrestrained appetence.

What conclusion might we draw from this? *Prohairesis*, and the 'use of impressions' are the genus-terms for all our psychological activity, and subject to 'use of impressions' are all the functions which we have considered. However, this does not exclude the necessity of assent for any conative function to take place — we must commit ourselves to any desire or action. Furthermore, Epictetus accepts the idea that impulse is the basic conative response of which there are various species which depend on the status of their object and the degree of their intensity for their variety. The schema of three *topoi* demonstrates the importance, for the *prokoptôn* of dealing first with appetence, then learning how to act dutifully, and lastly approaching the more theoretical aspects of philosophy. Although Epictetus brought appetence forward into an emphatic place in this schema in order to 'clear the decks' as far as potential for passion is concerned, this does not necessarily involve a change in the theory. In all the *topoi* the significant aspect is the matter of right judgements: the substance of the *prohairesis*, showing the essential unity of the *hêgemonikon's* activity. Epictetus' interest in this question is, as we are learning to expect, largely pedagogical. His first aim is to re-orient those who are unaware of their lack of wisdom and direct them towards the search for it, to make them *prokoptontes*, in other words. In the second place, he is trying to give them a reasonable *modus operandi* for proceeding with *prokopê* itself.

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[39] Voelke curiously draws exactly the opposite conclusion from this passage (*op. cit.* p.132 fn.2). Inwood, by contrast, concedes that this passage is 'the closest he comes to adopting the old Stoic usage' (p.117 fn. 54).

[40] cf. 1.28.1ff where, in the sphere of action, the *kathêkon* and *sympheron* correspond to 'the truth' in the case of assent.

2.3.1 Having established the relationship between appetence, impulse and assent, it might be of interest to consider briefly three other functions which are referred to in various of the lists, though all of them do not appear in every list: 'purpose' (*epibolê*), 'planning' (*prothesis*), and a term which can, in different contexts, be translated 'capability' or 'preparation' (*paraskeuê*)[41]. The first two of these are more difficult to define clearly or 'place' in relation to other functions, whereas the third, by contrast, supplies us with some evidence on Epictetus' view of our innate capacities and how we base our self-development upon them.

Both 'purpose' and 'planning' derive from verbs which Epictetus uses to refer to that which falls to us from the dictates of fate. So we are told that we have innate concepts of, for example, good and evil, and also 'what falls to us' (*epiballontos*, 2.11.3; *protithetai*, *Ench.* 50). From this, we find that the term is used to refer to that which comes to us as 'fitting' or 'appropriate' (1.26.5; 3.2.5; 3.22.6), and, by transference, that which we do which is fitting (2.5.28). This would seem, *prima facie*, to suggest that these functions resemble impulse more than appetence (4.6.26)[42], that is to say that they are not high-tensional forms of conation aimed at the good, but rather aimed at what is appropriate or dutiful conduct. This would be consistent with the definitions found in Stobaeus, where both are species of practical impulse (*Ecl.* 2.7.9 p.87 W). *Prothesis* is, enigmatically, an 'indication of completion' which seems to imply that it is the sort of planning which looks towards the means to ends: a long term planning of a general nature. Epictetus adds little to our understanding of this term other than to say that it must be used carefully (*epimelês*, 2.8.29).

'Purpose' is defined as an 'impulse before an impulse', which is slightly clearer: what is implied here is a basic conative response on which individual responses are based. However, we find in one place (*Ench.* 15) another use of the verb *epiballô* which might suggest a more intense operation. This chapter of the *Enchiridion* is concerned with the training of our desires to make them in accordance with fate and the events which actually happen to us. Epictetus compares life to a

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[41] The verb, *paraskeuazomai*, seems also to mean 'acquire', in some contexts.

[42] Bonhöffer *Epictet und die Stoa* p.258

banquet, in which food is passed round a table, and some diners therefore find that they do not receive from some dishes which are exhausted by the time they are passed to their place. We are thus not to set our appetence upon what is yet to come to us, and by analogy we are not to use it in respect of external things, such as our children, wife and public offices. The term which Epictetus uses for 'thrusting forward' our appetence towards uncertain future things is *epiballein*. This could be interpreted to connect *epibolê* with some future (apparent) advantage which we mistakenly perceive to be a good, and thus yearn for it, even though it is not in our power and thus the proper object of appetence.

This latter hypothesis would seem to be confirmed by a passage describing faults in the various functions, where we are to beware of 'unfulfilled purpose' (*epibolê atelês*, 3.22.104). This is a failing which is characteristically that of appetence, and refers, as we saw above, to the 'undertaking' of appetence being absolute success. If this is the case, then to 'purpose' is to plan one's life in a very fundamental way: it is to make a judgement about life's basic orientation, the judgement which determines whether we follow the true good which lies in the improvement of our intellectual and moral disposition, or whether we concern ourselves with 'externals'. This aspect is confirmed when Epictetus tells us that one must come to instruction with the right 'purpose', which is, '"How may I follow the gods in everything and how may I be pleasing to the divine dispensation, and how may I become free?"' (1.12.8; cf. 2.17.29). Similarly, we are to have the same purpose as Socrates: to 'rejoice in our becoming better' (3.5.15 & 17), not accusing or blaming either gods or men (*ibid.* 16).

2.3.2 'Purpose' cannot, however, be simply equivalent to appetence. As we have observed on a number of occasions, appetence is a deep yearning for the good which Epictetus instructs the *prokoptôn* to set aside in the initial stages of his development. In the contexts to which we have referred, we find the right 'purpose' being required of those who are in the early stages of progress, who are coming under instruction. Likewise, purpose is seen to be used of situations where appetence would be excluded: the teacher's concern for his pupil's development for example (1.19.29),

a situation where one would expect simple impulse, aimed at the *kathêkon*, to apply[43]. While purpose concerns the right orientation of the soul's endeavours, it is clearly not a desire for the ultimate aim of that endeavour, but rather a recognition of what that aim should be. It is tempting, therefore, to conclude it is an *epibolê* which is that judgement which is made at the crucial point in our lives which we have earlier described as a kind of conversion, the point at which we decide to reorient our lives away from externals to what is within. So Voelke is right (*op. cit.* pp.139-40) to describe *epibolê* as a 'fundamental project', and as an 'initial project from which all philosophical effort develops (4.8.19; 3.22.2 & 50). What is important, however, is that there is a degree of commitment involved: this is not simply a plan, as seems to be the case with *prothesis*, but a very real purpose to pursue some area of self-improvement.

So, we find in 2.17 an example of what one might call purpose in this sense. A young man comes into the school with a purpose to be free in all things and a friend of God, not fearing the future (§29). He thus works through the first *topos* and learns what is appropriate to avoid the enslavement of frustrated appetence. He then approaches the second *topos* in order to know how he is properly to conduct his relations towards others and what is *kathêkon*. Having mastered this, he proceeds to the third *topos*, because of his desire to conduct himself securely (*asphalôs* and *aseistôs*) in the face of all circumstances. Epictetus responds by saying, perhaps a little ironically: 'You are a god, my dear fellow, you have great purposes' (§33). This is a good purpose, then, as opposed, Epictetus tells us to those who are only interested in philosophy to read and discuss the treatises of others[44], and thus bring about no improvement in the way in which they use functions such as appetence, aversion, impulse, purpose itself, and planning (§36).

So, as with other functions we are to conform our purposing and planning to nature (1.4.14), and use natural standards (4.6.26). The key thing, it would seem, is

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[43] So, *prothesis* and *epibolê* are listed along with impulse rejection and assent as those things which are to be exercised in accordance with our own nature as well as universal nature (1.21.2)

[44] So at 1.26.16 we find people purposing (*epiballontai*) in the wrong way to read treatises when they are not properly prepared for this.

consistency: our purposes are not to be 'inconsistent' (*anomologoumenai*, 2.14.22). What is meant by 'inconsistency' in this context is elucidated by Origen, who cites Chrysippus as insisting that 'all passion' is with those who 'believe that pleasure is a good and posit an inconsistent end' (*Contra Celsum* 5.51 = *SVF* 3.474, p.125.6-8)[45]. This confirms our hypothesis that purpose is concerned principally with discernment of our end and planning out our moral progress according to the schema which Epictetus and the Stoics set out: the elimination of passions by the setting aside of appetence and restriction of aversion, and the control of impulse, leading to a better understanding of the world.

Epibolê, then, is a purpose which requires us to make a long-term assessment of what is beholden of us, without the intensity which is characteristic of appetence. When we turn from externals we put aside appetence, and so we must make some less intense impulsive conation which will govern our responses in later situations. The content of such a purpose would be to learn the difference between the domain of good and evil and that of indifferents and to lay aside one's interest in externals and cultivate the *prohairesis* and one's progress in it towards its optimum state (1.4.18; 4.1.83).

2.3.3 The third of these additional functions is *paraskeuê*. As we observed above, it is difficult to find a single translation which will do justice to this term, which seems to mean both 'capability' and 'preparation'[46]. Clearly it belongs to the same family as the others which we have mentioned: along with appetence, aversion, impulse and planning, it requires that we receive an impression which is '...of something advantageous (*lysitelous*) or at least appropriate (3.22.43). However, far more than is the case with the others it includes the notion of innate capacities, of which we ought to be aware and to take into consideration in our thoughts and actions[47]:

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[45] cf. Voelke's pointing out that *epibolê* is a measure of whether or not we are a true philosopher (*op. cit.* p.141)

[46] According to Stobaeus (*Ecl.* 2 p.87 W) it is an 'action before action'.

[47] The aspect of *paraskeuê* which relates to our self-consciousness (eg. 2.6.3) we shall discuss in greater detail in a subsequent chapter where we deal with Epictetus notion of the self in the light of similar ideas found in Hierocles.

> 'For who is there that, having 'conceived' and been full of such great judgements, does not perceive his own capability (*paraskeuê*) and is thus impelled towards the appropriate tasks? But a bull is not ignorant of his own nature and capability (*paraskeuê*) when some wild animal appears nor does he await someone to urge him on, nor a dog, when it sees one of the wild animals. If I have the capability of a good man, shall I wait, so that you can prepare me for my own works? But now I don't have it, believe me. Why, then, do you wish me to dry up before my time, as you have dried out completely yourself.' (4.8.41-3)[48]

One may have a *paraskeuê* for logic, for example (1.7.28), or for feeling the right way about good and evil. Our own capability, as provided by God, is something which we ought to contemplate, so that we can understand where our strengths and weaknesses lie (2.6.3, 3.22.107,109). Universal capacities also come into the sphere of *paraskeuê* (eg. 1.6.43): we find that the fact of our *prohairesis* being within our power, as opposed to external things which will frustrate us, is described as a *paraskeuê* which we are to consider before making any decision (3.22.107).

However, these capabilities are not simply 'given' to us; we are also able to acquire and develop them:

> 'And having acquired this capability (*paraskeuên paraskeusamenos*) and exercised one's training to distinguish the alien from that which belongs to us, the subject to hindrance from the unhindered, and to consider that latter to be of concern to you and the former of no concern to you, to keep your appetence unswervingly on the latter and your aversion on the former, surely you should fear no-one?' (4.1.81).
>
> It is in this respect, then that *paraskeuê* is a function comparable with impulse and its cognates, a way of 'using impressions' under the heading of *prohairesis*. In this passage, the capacity which is being developed is the ability to have the appropriate attitude to the body and

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[48] cf. 1.2.30 where, in a parallel passage, the matter is related to the *prosôpon* or *rôle* which brings in the question of the outward working of the self.

> externals, regarding them as 'alien' and not within the scope of those things which can be the object of appetence and aversion. In order to know what is within the domain of good and evil, as opposed to indifferents, we need 'great preparation, great effort and study' (1.20.13) to acquire a skill (*technê*) which will give us this discernment. Likewise, and perhaps as a result of this skill, freedom is 'acquired' (4.1.175). Elsewhere, in a passage dealing with the importance of logic in structuring arguments, we find the need to develop a *paraskeuê* and *gymnasia* in order to allow us to maintain logical order (*hexês*). We 'make preparation' for the things which happen to us, by taking the right attitude to them (3.10.6 *Ench.*22): this is the summation of what philosophy means.

So we can, by making appropriate judgements, develop capacities which we have, and even bring into being new ones, as with faculties and dispositions[49]. This reflects, therefore, an important aspect of the work of the *prohairesis*, the development of its own natural capacities to enable it to function better in the use of its other functions. The proper use of our mental training (*meletê*) shows itself in the way in which we 'prepare' our appetence and aversion, to make the former free from hindrance and the latter free from falling into what it would avert (1.1.31 cf. 1.2.32). It shows also the unifying rôle of *prohairesis* that it can draw together such a variety of different functions and the interrelation between them.

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[49] cf. 2.6.3 for the connection between *paraskeuê* and faculty.

2.4.1 It might be appropriate, as we bring this chapter to a conclusion to draw together a number of themes by considering briefly the relation of the operation of *prohairesis* and the functions through which it operates to the idea of 'freedom' (*eleutheria*). This is a matter of great importance to Epictetus and to the Stoic tradition in general. Freedom, according to the Stoics, was an aspect of the state of wisdom or virtue: the perfect disposition of the *hêgemonikon* in sympathy with nature. Epictetus concurs with this view, and applies it to his own system. Freedom, he emphasises, is a good (4.1.52), and, as we have seen, the good lies for Epictetus in that state of the soul which is both the result and the exercise of right use of impressions, and also a 'right *prohairesis*':

> 'When this (sc. use of impressions) comes about rightly (*orthôs*), then there is freedom, smooth flow of life (*euroia*), cheerfulness, steadfastness, and this is also justice and law and self-control and all virtue.' (*Fr.* 4 cf. 4.3.7).

Likewise the absence of freedom lies in 'madness' (1.12.10) and 'error': no-one who has false judgements and 'lives in error' can be free (2.1.24; 2.16.41).

Epictetus demonstrates how this right use of impressions, as an activity, as well as a state tends towards this freedom. He concurs with the conventional Greek view that freedom lies in being able to do as we please (2.1.12), but only to a point, that is to say that he regards it as a matter of urgency that we revise our view of the world, our judgements (*dogmata*) (4.1.112; cf. 2.1.21) in such a way that ensures that what we wish to happen is in accordance with what actually will, or at least may happen (1.12.9). This lies behind his emphasis on our being aware of what is genuinely 'within our power' (*eph'hêmin*) which is the subject of the following chapter. More importantly for our purpose at this stage, it underlies the teaching which we have considered in this chapter on the subject of appetence. Epictetus, we saw, placed considerable emphasis on the idea that we should restrict appetence and aversion to objects which are within our power, as the strength of the yearning involved in these particular functions is such that, if frustrated, it leads to passions which are dangerous to the well-being of the soul (4.1.84). Freedom, he insists, is not acquired by satisfying desire (*epithymia*), but by destroying it (4.1.175).

One aspect of freedom, therefore, which is very important to Epictetus is

freedom *from* passions such as desire (*epithymia*), the result of misplaced appetence, and fear (*phobos*) the result of misplaced aversion (2.1.21 & 24). Our discussion of how these things are avoided by the acquisition of appropriate judgements about the true nature of the world and the restrictions placed upon us by fate, thus acquires a new significance. Freedom, Epictetus tells us is not acquired by attention to external things, which leads rather to slavery to them and those who control them, but rather to the development of one's own *hêgemonikon* (3.15.12), exchanging these passions for fruits of virtue such as passionlessness (*apatheia*), freedom and freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*). Freedom begins, and slavery ends, at the point where we appreciate that externals are not 'ours', but that the use of impressions is (3.24.67). 'Reservation', that judgement which, as we saw, prevents an impulse in the direction of something not known to be a good from becoming an inappropriately-directed appetence, also contributes to this process of keeping us 'free' from passion. While appetence was to be set aside, we were left with properly-directed aversion as an appropriate function to be exercised by the *prokoptôn*, the state of passion is one of the evils which should be its object. So the free man does not grasp after the things which are not 'his own', that is to say, that which is not within our power (4.1.128-130).

2.4.2 However, Epictetus also insisted on what might be called a positive view of freedom which is connected with the restriction of our yearnings. In addition to not desiring that which was outwith our power and could not come about within the dictates of fate and providence, Epictetus also requires of us that discipline which was, in the early Stoa (and by Epictetus himself, who cites the *Hymn to Zeus* at 4.1.131), associated with Cleanthes, of embracing actual events, however apparently disadvantageous, as the work of Providence, and learning to actually wish them[50]. So freedom lies in being able to have and do what we will, since we will only for that which actually happens (1.12.17; 2.14.7).

This in turn is connected with the pursuit of the 'end' through the cognate aim of 'following the gods'. If we accept and embrace what happens as the will of Provi-

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[50] So, for example, we must embrace our own mortality (2.1.14ff).

dence and do not grumble against it or 'blame God' (4.1.109), as Epictetus has it, then we are 'giving up to god what he has given us' (4.1.172). We are to submit our impulse to God (4.1.89) and to will and exercise appetence in harmony with him (2.17.23; cf. 4.7.20). Moreover the observation of the divine dispensation which is a feature of our purpose as human beings, teaches us to do this better by instructing us in the patterns according to which the universe functions (the *hormai* of God and his governance, 4.1.100), and thereby we can learn the better to submit ourselves to them (1.12.7).

2.5 This chapter may have seemed to be something of a digression: a straying into ethical matters. However, it is important to consider what it means for Epictetus to insist on a single consciousness or overarching faculty of the mind. For Epictetus, when we exercise impulse or appetence, we are exercising *prohairesis* and 'using impressions'. Regardless of the specific nature of the conative response, we are undertaking the same fundamental activity: responding to an impression. Furthermore, all these mental activities have the same consequence: the better or poorer state of the *prohairesis* and therefore of ourselves.

In this area, the so-called *topoi* come into their own. Epictetus divides our 'uses of impressions' into a programme of self-improvement. His aim is to attend first to those areas where the most damage can potentially be done: the question of orientation, our beliefs about the good. An error here will result in inevitable failure. In the second place we learn to categorise our social behaviour, the ordinary intentions of day to day action: a question we shall return to in Chapter 4 when we consider Epictetus' view of the extended self. Last of all, we can attend to theoretical matters.

In defining idea the nature of the good, and thereby the areas which represent the appropriate realm of appetence, Epictetus has put some flesh on the bones of Arius Didymus' dry doxography. This definition depends largely on Epictetus' own understanding of what is within our power, and thus what we must aim towards if we are to avoid frustration. It is to this question that the next chapter will address itself.

Chapter 3: *Prohairesis*, 'use of impressions' and what is within our power.

3.1.1 Arrian begins the first book of the *Diatribai* of Epictetus with a chapter entitled, 'Concerning those things which are within our power (*eph'hêmin*) and those not within our power.' Likewise, the first chapter of the *Enchiridion* treats on a similar theme, telling us in its opening words, that, 'Of existing things, some are within our power and some are not within our power.' The presence of these discussions at the very beginning of the two works is not mere coincidence. It is clear from even the briefest of perusals of the *corpus* of Epictetan thought presented to us by Arrian, that the historian considered Epictetus' teaching on this subject to be right at the heart of his philosophical system, and thus that the presence of these chapters in such an emphatic position is a device to draw this to the particular attention of the reader. It is an important consideration, therefore, in any discussion of the moral psychology of Epictetus, as to what his position on this issue might be, and especially whether it differs from that of his Stoic predecessors in any way, or shows any sign of development.

Like all Stoics, Epictetus is the inheritor of a system of thought which is commonly called 'deterministic', since it assumes a strict causal nexus embracing all the events in the world, and argues that 'necessity' thus brings it about that each event is determined by prior causes. However, like his Stoic predecessors, he seeks to help his students to 'live well': to fulfil a moral end which requires that they be responsible for their lives in the truly significant aspects of those lives. To the modern mind (and to many of the Stoics' critics, particularly in the early Imperial period in which Epictetus lived), the Stoics must clearly define that which they consider to be within our power if they are to convincingly maintain both of these principles simultaneously. Furthermore, the Stoics associated the cognate concept of 'freedom' with the fulfilment of this end; it is only the 'wise man' who is truly free, and it is in the rational exercise of specifically human functions that freedom is won. In this first section we shall sketch out the various contexts in which Epictetus discusses the question of what is within our power, in anticipation of a wider discussion of how, and to what extent, he derives his doctrine and emphases from the earlier Stoic

tradition and its preoccupation with the causes of our actions and our responsibility for them.

We have observed in the previous chapter the importance which Epictetus assigns to the mental faculty which he calls the *prohairesis*, and the 'use of impressions'. This is closely associated by him with what is within our power, and is the subject of the first chapter of the first book of the *Diatribai*, which as we have observed, purports to treat on the subject of those things which are within our power. There is no list of things within our outwith our control, rather, it begins with a discussion of the 'use of impressions', justifying its primacy among human faculties (§§1-6), then pointing out its irrelevance to things external to the self (§§7-14), and drawing the conclusion that this is the faculty to be considered above all others (§14-20). The conclusion is that psychological stability is the end of human life, and it is to this purpose that all our thoughts and decisions should be directed (§§21-32).

Epictetus emphasises therefore that it is the domain of *prohairesis* and 'use of impressions', the mental, which is within our power (1.22.9-10; 2.13.10), as opposed to what he calls 'externals' (2.5.4-5). At the beginning of the *Enchiridion* he spells this distinction out in greater detail:

> 'Of things which exist, some are within our power and some are not within our power. Within our power are conception, impulse, appetence, aversion, and in a word, all that are our tasks. Not within our power are the body, the possessions, reputations, public offices and in a word, all that are not our tasks' (*Ench.* 1.1)

We must note two things about this division: first of all, it establishes an emphasis on the internal: the things which are within our power are all, as it were mental processes, they are all, in Stoic terms, events which take place within the *hêgemonikon*, whereas the things which are outwith our power are all essentially external to the workings of the soul. These externals include, Epictetus emphasises, the impression (*phantasia*) itself, over which we have no control, however much we may have full autonomy over our responses to it (3.24.108). Secondly, there is a functional idea at work: the things which are within our power are described as *all that are our tasks*, whereas the things outwith our control are *all that are not our tasks*. This usage of *ergon* must surely at least include the notion of a human

'function': that it is our 'task' to attend to these things rather than others. This latter point is borne out by two short comments in 1.1:

> 'Thus, then, as was appropriate, the gods have made the most powerful and authoritative of all (faculties) to be the only one in our power: to wit, the correct use of impressions, and the rest not within our power.' (§7)

> '"What, then?" It is necessary to arrange what is in our power as best as is possible and make use of the rest as nature ordains. "How, then, does nature ordain?" As God wishes.' (§17)

Thus it seems to be the case that Epictetus wishes us to understand that the division of things which are within our power and are not is also designed to reflect what is the function of human beings *qua* human beings. So, Epictetus insists that 'the Good' of man is something which is essentially within our power and concerned with things which are within our power[1]. The use of 'tasks' (*erga*) in this passage also reinforces Epictetus' view that there is an exact correspondence between the domain of that which we are actually able to achieve and the domain of that which we are required by the moral imperative of nature, the Stoic 'end', to seek to achieve. We are not asked to do anything which we cannot. What is perhaps peculiar is the starkness of the distinction. Even the state of our own body, let alone anything which we can do in the world, is outwith our power.

3.1.2 Correspondingly, what *is* unquestionably within our power, is the range of mental functions which we saw in the previous chapter can be subsumed under the

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[1] So, at 1.22.11, he engages in an argument that begins with the presumption that the Good for man must lie within our power, then, accepting that other things which are not within our power, such as health and life are popularly thought to be goods, he considers what consequences that has for the concept of 'good' (§13). Using the preconception that the good will bring happiness, he asks how one could be happy (*eudaimôn*) if one aimed at such a good and failed to get it. The Good for man, it is thus implied, can only lie in those things which we can have without fail, which are infallibly 'within our power' according to Epictetus' understanding of the term.

general headings of 'use of impressions' and 'prohairesis'[2]. These functions, Epictetus tells us, have been placed in our hands by God, who has not even reserved to himself the capacity to interfere with them:

> 'And indeed, not only has God given us these faculties, in accordance with which we bear all that takes place without being abased or constrained by it, but (what was the act of a good king, and in truth, a father), has given us this, unhindered, unnecessitated and free from interference, and has placed it all under our control; not even leaving himself any powers in respect of it to hinder or interfere.' (1.6.40)

We find in this passage three adjectives which recur in a number of contexts in Epictetus in connection with the question of what is within our power: *akôlyton, ananankaston*, and *aparapodiston*, which have been translated as 'unhindered, unnecessitated and free from interference'. The second of these, in particular, might seem controversial (Oldfather translates 'free from compulsion'), but this has been particularly chosen to illustrate the interest which Epictetus seems to have had, despite claims to the contrary, in the Stoic theory of causation and necessity. Chrysippus goes to considerable lengths, in his account of what is within our power, to demonstrate that the assent of the *hêgemonikon* is non-necessary. Although part of fate, the particular assents we make are not wholly necessitated by the external causes and events which precede them. Epictetus seems to be seeking to present a similar escape for human freedom in the idea presented here that God (who is identified with Fate in the Stoic system) does not reserve for himself the ability to constrain the activities of the *hêgemonikon*.

The use of these three terms also illustrates the close link which Epictetus makes between the notion of what is within our power and the Stoic idea of inner freedom, which lies in having one's *hêgemonikon* properly disposed. In the domain

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[2] So, for example, 'use of impressions is the only thing in our power (1.1.7; 2.19.32), appetence and aversion are within our power (2.2.6). 'Use of impressions', and *prohairesis*, as we observed in the previous chapter, include a wide range of functions, including 'assent' and 'impulse', the two central mental functions of the Stoic system.

of what is within our power, we have the ability to be absolutely free; in this domain nothing external to us need influence us, since we have complete autonomy to resist, even, it would seem, the power of divine necessity, the chain of causes. So, Epictetus tells us that the things which are within the domain of the *prohairesis*, the *prohairetika* are 'unhindered' (*akôlyta*, 4.7.8). In this context, therefore, Epictetus tells us that we are not to do everything 'that comes along' (*to epelthon* 4.12.6), rather, we are to be attentive to the way in which we use impressions. However, we cannot expect to interfere ourselves in the activity of divine fate in the world external to our minds, as is illustrated by the passage cited above (1.1.17). We are to do all we can to have our soul properly disposed; to achieve that which is truly in our power to achieve, but as for other things, we must submit to the dictates of nature, and 'make use' of external things in such a way as does not entail any expectation of having them as we should wish, since they are not 'within our power'. Such a striving leads to frustration and passion which are inconsistent with having a '*prohairesis* as it ought to be' (cf.2.13.1).

3.1.3 In fact the soul is not subject to the interference of any other person, but, if misused can become *de facto* in the control of others, inasmuch as when an individual is in a passionate state, through fear or lust, for example, he in some sense loses the personal autonomy which Epictetus values so highly (4.1.66-8). Not everything now is as he wishes, he is not 'free', since, although ultimately by his own decision, external circumstances are influencing his inner life:

> 'Who is the unhindered man? He who aims at nothing which is 'alien'. What are the 'alien' things? Those which are not within our power to obtain or not obtain or obtain according to some quality or disposition. So the body is alien, its parts are alien, property is alien. If you have a passionate desire for one of these things as if it were your own, you will be punished appropriately for one who aimed at things alien to him.' (4.1.129-30)

This, therefore, lies at the root of Epictetus' identification of what is within our power with the internal life of the *prohairesis*. Any interference which anything external to us can have over this domain is entirely with our consent, and, in some sense, is our

own positive determination; it is this 'non-passive' feature of the Stoic doctrine of 'passion' which Epictetus makes most of, and shows him at his most sympathetic with Chrysippus. By contrast, it is entirely within our power to be secure, by avoiding precipitate assent (4.10.3). Taking the appropriate disposition into our experience of the world, Epictetus calls 'making good use of them' (*Ench.* 18), that is to say, making the appropriate judgements about the outside world; we may be constrained in what we do, but cannot be hindered from doing what we are constrained to do 'in a fine manner' (3.10.9).

As we have seen, this identification of what is within our power with the domain of freedom in the absolute autonomy of the soul and the absolute subjection to hindrance which belongs to the body and externals is something which Epictetus sees as part of God's administration of the universe, and it is he who as it were, is the 'judge' of our conduct of what is within our power, and the guarantor of our autonomy in those areas where it applies:

> 'Do you not then give thanks to the gods, since they have allowed you to be above those things which they did not make to be within your power, and have rendered you accountable (*hypeuthynon*) for the things which are within your power' (1.12.32)

So Epictetus, like the earlier Stoics, does see the notion of what is within our power as being connected to that for which we are responsible. The recognition of what we are responsible for and what is within our power is a religious duty, since it is an act of submission to God, a recognition that he also has his appropriate domain, with which we cannot, and dare not wish to interfere (*Fr.*4.3). What is restricted is what we are responsible for. Unlike the earlier Stoics who were preoccupied with responsibility for external action, and were thus prepared to accept the assent of the mind as being a contributing (if the most important) cause, Epictetus wishes to identify that which we can be solely and exclusively responsible for. If his idea of what that involves is more restricted, it may be that his idea of what level of freedom we have within the domain of things for which we are responsible, is the wider.

3.2.1 Before considering Epictetus' doctrine of *eph'hêmin* in a more detailed and systematic fashion, we shall require to elucidate briefly the position of the earlier Stoics on this question. This is a much-discussed and, in some respects, controversial subject, but we shall need to sketch out a basic account with which we can compare our discussion of Epictetus. The testimonia which we have received makes the underlying theme of the Stoics' interest in the question of what is within our power their belief in fate and their theory of causation. The Stoics argued that the first cause of all things was God *qua* Fate, a *pneuma* which pervaded all the grosser matter to a greater or lesser extent, ordering it and giving it form ([Aëtius] 1.7.33 = *SVF.* 2.1027; DL 7.135-6). Furthermore, fate was active *reason* (Stob. 1.79.1-12 = *SVF.* 2.913) This fate operated as a sequence of causes ([Aëtius] 1.28.4 = *SVF* 2.917), of which all events and states were a part (Aulus Gellius *N.A.* 7.2.1&3). Each state or event came about as a result of one or more prior causes, and was itself eligible to be the cause of future states or events (Alexander *De Fato* 191.30-192.28)[3]. The absolute regularity of this operation of Fate was the Stoic account of Necessity, which they believed essential to the working of the universe. Everything was subject to this law of Necessity, and it was believed that *identical* circumstances (that is to say the coming together of exactly the same causes contemporaneously) would necessarily result in the same outcome (Nemesius *Nat.Hom* 292-3).

It is this doctrine of causation, therefore, which led to the accusation that the Stoics were unable, despite their protests, to justify systematically the retention of the belief that there was something which was 'within our power', some feature of the causal nexus which allowed people to be held responsible for their actions. The chief criticism was that the Stoics effectively 'abolished praise and blame', since, if all our actions were the result of a chain of prior causes stretching back to the beginning of

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[3] Strictly speaking, the Stoics did not argue that one thing was the *cause* of another, but rather that it was the cause of one thing's having something predicated of it; cf. Stobaeus 1.138.14-139.4 = *SVF* 1.89 & 2.366; Sextus *M.*9.211; Clement *Strom.* 8.9.30.1-3 = *SVF.* 2.349; M. Frede 'The Original Notion of Cause' in *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford 1987) pp.137-8. In other words, an object or event brings it about that another object undergoes a (corporeal) change, such that it is capable of being described differently from before, thereby acquiring a different (incorporeal) property: the *lekton* which is used in this new description.

the universe, it was therefore *necessary* that we should act as we did. The Stoics' critics, notably Alexander of Aphrodisias, insisted that the concept of responsibility depended upon what one might call 'absolute freedom', the view that, presented with any set of circumstances, it should be possible, not only to act as one did, but in the opposite manner as well (*De Fato* 181.13; Nemesius *op.cit.* 293). This was a criterion which the Stoics would have had no difficulty in admitting that their system did not meet.

The Stoic account of what was within our power concentrated on how we might find a place for responsibility *within* the causal nexus, and if the detailed discussions which we have, particularly that of Cicero, are to be believed, they focused on two particular aspects of this: first that our involvement as causes depended not on our ability and responsibility to deliberate (as had been the key for Aristotle), but on our responsibility for our *character*, which then, within the overall pattern of fate, determined our response to circumstances, and secondly the detailed breakdown of the various causes of a human action, in respect of the attribution of greater or lesser responsibility to each of these causes (Cic. *De Fato* 40ff).

3.2.2 The Stoic account of human action was based fundamentally on the impulse (*hormê*), an event which connected the impression (*phantasia*) with the motion of the body which constituted the action (Stobaeus 2.88.2f). Impulse, as orthodox Stoicism emphasised, was an *assent* to an impression (Stobaeus *ibid.*; Plutarch *St.Rep.* 1057a). The physical event of receiving the impression in the *hêgemonikon* preceded a reaction of some kind. Either the mind might assent to or dissent from the impression. In the case of an impulse, the assent was to an impression which was capable of directing an 'appropriate act' (*kathêkon*), and was a 'movement of the soul' towards such an object (Stob. 2.86.17-87.6 = *SVF.* 3.169; Plut. *St. Rep.* 1037f). In other words it was to an impression whose propositional content (which, though incorporeal, was inextricably linked to the physical event of the impression), contained an imperative to action[4], and the *hêgemonikon*, by virtue of that assent, set the body to work in

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[4] Stobaeus 2.88 & 97-8. Origen (*De Princ.* 3.108 = *SVF* 2.988, p.288.1-10) informs us that, for example, a spider has an impression of spinning a web, and a bee of moulding wax, and, by virtue of this impression, they are impelled to perform the

pursuit of the achievement of the action. It is at the point of assent that the character of the individual played a significant rôle:

> '"Although it may be the case", he (sc. Chrysippus) said, "that all things are compelled and bound together in fate by a certain necessary reason and principle, nonetheless, the particular natures of our minds are subject to fate directly in proportion to their propriety and quality. For if, in the first place, they were created by nature healthily and usefully, they will pass on that forces which comes from fate outside of us in a way which is fairly harmless and tractable. But if, on the other hand, they are harsh and ignorant and crude and supported by no props in the form of good arts, then even if they are urged on by little or no necessity of adverse fate, nonetheless, by their own wickedness and voluntary impulse they will fling themselves into crime after crime and into errors."' (Gellius 7.2.7-8)

So, it was the individual 'tension' (*tonos*) of the *hêgemonikon* which determined whether, and how, the impression should be assented to (Philo *Leg Alleg* 1.30 = *SVF* 2.844). This tension which is represented by the disposition or quality of the *hêgemonikon*, is the result, both of natural capacities, which are granted to us according to the dictates of fate, as Gellius observes above, but also of changes brought about as a result of previous assents to impressions (Cic. *Acad* 2.31), assents which were, in the Stoic account, within our power.

It is in this respect, therefore, that the Stoic idea of responsibility fails to meet the standard set by those who demanded the possibility of alternative action at every point. According to Alexander, the Stoics took the view that the motion resulting from rational impulse was the 'natural' way in which rational human minds acted in accordance with fate, just as it was 'natural' for stones to fall and fire to burn (*De Fato* cp.13). It is the natural movement which comes about through (*dia*) the animal. Alexander questions whether, if necessity ensures the essential movement and result of fate in the case of inanimate objects, the account of animal movement through

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actions. Human beings, as Origen emphasises, according to the Stoics, had in addition, the ability to judge impressions rationally.

impulse and assent is sufficiently different to justify the view that can be regarded as 'in the power of' (*epi*) the animal, as well as 'through' it (cf. esp. 182.9-20).

While individual assents were determined by 'us', the manner of their determination had causes which could ultimately be traced back to basic capacities which were given to us by fate (Alex. *De Fato* cp.13). Cicero tells us (*De Fato* cp.9) that these capacities were the main determining factors in our individual character[5]. However, the Stoics seem happy to conclude that this process is complex enough for it to be reasonable to claim that the gradual alteration of our character through our own unique moral development — the dispositional changes brought about by assents to impressions — was attributable to us. Once we had added to these capacities, they were irreducibly *our* capacities. As Suzanne Bobzien remarks, 'Chrysippus defends responsibility by arguing that someone else would have done something else in the same situation, or that it is in the range of possible human behaviour to do something else; he does not argue that the same person could have done something else in the same situation'[6]. Although an external impression may be determined by fate, and our response to it by our character, that assent (or refusal of assent) is a responsible action on our part.

3.2.3 The second strand to which we alluded earlier is the analysis of causes for which Chrysippus, in particular, was renowned. A critic might accept the rôle of character in the causation of our actions, but might nonetheless object that the Stoic account required that the individual have his circumstances presented to him by an external impression, before any action would result. The question might arise as to whether or not the external cause might be so strong a cause that it would in any case necessitate an action, regardless of the individual's character. According to Cicero, it was this idea of 'necessity', which Chrysippus wanted, if not to remove from the account, at least to mitigate in the interests of promoting human responsibility (*De Fato* 39).

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[5] He describes them as *causae principales* which indicates that they were the main determining cause.

[6] *Stoic Determinism* (Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1992) p.278

The strategy adopted was to associate the contribution of the human mind, determined by the individual character, with the most significant cause of the action. According to Cicero's account, the causes of our actions could be divided, broadly speaking, into two categories: those which were 'perfectae et principales', and those which were 'adiuvantes et proximae' (*De Fato* 41). The *causa perfecta* we can equate with the *aition autoteles* or *aition synektikon* which we find in Greek sources (eg. Plutarch *St.Rep.* 47; 1056 bc; Clement *Strom.* 8.9.33 = *SVF* 2.351; M. Frede, *op.cit.* 140), and it is equally clear from these parallel accounts that the *causae adiuvantes et proximae* are subdivisions of those which are called *aitia prokatarktika.* It is causes of the latter type of which are the external processes of fate which culminate in the presentation to the mind of an impression (Plutarch 1056b): these are the 'antecedent' causes of our impulse, and are causes of a type which cannot necessitate the action (Frede *op.cit.* p.140). For impulse to take place, however, would require a cause which is either *perfecta*, one which in itself necessitates the action (Clement *loc.cit*), or at least *principalis*, that is to say that, although it requires an antecedent cause to assist or stimulate it, is none the less the strongest of the contributory causes to the event, and is thus the one which determines the *manner* in which the event takes place.

This last seems to be the model which Chrysippus, as Cicero reports him, takes to be that of assent and impulse, which are the things which are 'in nostra potestate'. The sense-impression is a 'proximate' cause which assists the 'principal' cause of the assent of the mind, the nature of which is determined by our character. This is illustrated by the 'cylinder' image, paralleled in Aulus Gellius, in which the fact that the cylinder rolls when pushed (or placed on a slope in the Gellius account), and the manner of its rolling, is not a consequence of its having been pushed, but rather by virtue of a *vis* which it has within itself, its *volubilitas*. There are, therefore, as Frede points out (*op.cit.p.140*), two *vires* at work, one within, and one without, but it is that within which is the significant one, since it is that which makes the cylinder actually *roll*. If the cylinder had not that shape, it would require a much stronger external force to make it move, one which would perhaps be a *causa perfecta*. Plutarch (*loc cit.*) tells us that the procatarctic cause is weaker than the complete cause, and it must be equally true that the procatarctic causes which

combine, as the influences of fate, to act upon us and present impressions to us are weaker than the 'principal' cause which governs our response to them.

Most commentators[7] seem satisfied that assent in this account represents the *autoteles* cause, and that Cicero intends that *perfecta et principalis* be taken to represent this by way of hendiadys, an interpretation which the syntax of the sentence seems to support. However, in addition to there being a puzzle in respect of the absence in the Greek of an obvious equivalent to the *causa principalis*, the other testimony which we have about the complete cause does not seem to fit well with the similes of Chrysippus which are reproduced by Cicero and Gellius, as David Sedley points out in a recent article[8]. The account of Clement, cited above, tells us that the *autoteles* cause produces the effect of itself, being equivalent to a 'sustaining' (*synek-tikon*) cause. However, it is clearly a feature of the model of assent and impulse presented here, that some kind of antecedent cause is required to stimulate the mind into action. The complete cause can be assisted by an 'auxiliary' (*synergon*) cause, which appears to be a species of procatarctic cause, and probably answers to Cicero's *causa adiuvans* (Pohlenz *Die Stoa* 2.60). However, it is emphasised that the function of this cause is merely to intensify the effect of the complete cause, and that it does not contribute in any way to the *bringing about* of the effect (Sextus *PH* 3.15)[9]. In Clement's account the cause which answers most nearly to the account of assent and impulse in Cicero is the 'combined' cause (*synaition*), which cannot necessitate the effect by itself, but requires another non-complete cause to join with it, like the character of the individual mind joined with the impression. However, if one assumes that this is the cause which corresponds to what we find in the account of responsibil-ity in assent, then one of the combined causes must have been the more significant or

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[7] eg. Pohlenz *op.cit.* 1.105; Frede *op.cit.* 138-9

[8] 'Chrysippus on Psychophysical Causality' in Brunschwig and Nussbaum (*edd.*) *Passions and Perceptions* (Cantab. 1993) esp. pp.322-4

[9] Frede's analysis of the main internal cause as being *autoteles* allows him to make this the cause which fate consists in in presenting impressions to us (*op.cit.* 131).

stronger. It is this which Sedley chooses to call the 'salient' cause[10]. We cannot assent therefore, except to an impulse, but the manner of the assent or dissent is the determining factor in the subsequent events which are attributable to us.

2.2.4 Does this constitute an escape from the fate-theorem for human action? Clearly it does not represent absolute free decision between alternatives at the point of assent, as A.A. Long correctly observes[11], since one cannot choose to have a different impression nor can one instantaneously change one's character or natural endowments in such a way that would change the outcome of a particular assent. Suzanne Bobzien points out that, in fact, there is no evidence that Chrysippus was attempting to deal with the problems of free decision in the causation account[12], an assertion which must surely be strengthened by the absence of any discussion of it in Alexander, whose priority, in his refutation of the Stoics, was to establish the necessity of free decision to any reasonable concept of what was *eph'hêmin*. What Chrysippus is seeking to do, as Cicero reminds us, is to remove *necessity* from the account. This does not remove the Stoic theory of causation, nor the fate theorem — Chrysippus says that all things are by fate (Cic. *De Fato* 21) — but rather it seeks to remove the notion that human beings are uniform instruments of causation. So we find that Chrysippus denies the 'necessitas fati' (Cic. *De Fato* 39): there is at least one area of the activity of fate which is not 'necessary', in the sense of uniformity of outcome. The same causes presented as impressions, will not result in exactly the same reactions, whether the man be vicious or virtuous. Different people will assent to different impressions or refuse them, and likewise their impulses will differ in intensity.

Pohlenz is close to the mark in suggesting that 'the individual decision of the

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[10] *op.cit* p.323: '...which determine an object's or agents's behaviour only when combined with a set of further necessary or appropriate conditions'. There is no obvious etymological link, between *synaition* and *principalis,* but Frede's suggestion that the *causa principalis* was called the *aition kyrion* or *kyriôtaton* (*op.cit.* 142) would seem to fit the interpretation that the *causa principalis* was the chief determining cause towards a particular effect.

[11] *Hellenistic Philosophy* p.167

[12] *op.cit.* p.5

will is freely a link in the causal chain'[13]. While our decisions and other assents are part of fate, which have causes and are themselves causes, they are not, it would seem *necessary*, in the sense that the Stoics thought other events in the world were necessary: the outcome *depends* upon something which could *possibly* be one way or another, even if in practice in could not.

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[13] *ibid.* 106

3.3.1 Epictetus' discussion of *eph'hêmin* is dominated, as we have seen, by the *prohairesis*, or 'use of impressions', a faculty of the *hêgemonikon* which embraces the other faculties of the *hêgemonikon* and thereby governs those of the soul in general (1.1.7; 2.23.8). It is this faculty which is 'within our power' (2.19.32). As we have seen, it embraces a wide range of intellectual functions, some of which are listed, for example, in the first chapter of the *Enchiridion*. There is a corresponding list of things which are not in our power[14], but what is striking is that Epictetus means us to understand a sharp distinction between the two realms. He speaks frequently of the 'things within the domain of the *prohairesis*' (*ta prohairetika*)[15] and the 'things outwith the domain of the *prohairesis*' (*ta aprohaireta* 2.13.10; 4.1.100), or 'externals' (2.5.4-5). These are equated with the things which are within our power and those outwith. Another common expression describes these two domains as things which are 'ours' (*idion*), and things which are 'alien' (*allotrion*) (eg. 3.24.23). This collection of synonyms and corresponding antonyms is at the heart of Epictetus' thought, and demonstrates the centrality of the doctrine of *eph'hêmin*. For just as the demarcation of what is within our power and what is not marks the extent of our mind and its domain, through its association with the *prohairesis* and 'use of impressions', so, as we shall see, when we discuss the point at length in a later chapter, it marks the extent of the self through the association with what belongs to us and what is 'alien'.

The two domains also mark out for Epictetus the boundaries of what is good or evil on the one hand, and what is 'indifferent' on the other:

> 'If, therefore, the things outwith the domain of the *prohairesis* are neither goods nor evils, but all the things in the domain of the *prohairesis* are within our power, and that none of us can take them

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[14] 'In the class of things which are not up to us (τα οὐκ εφ'ἡμῖν) they put everything else that has some influence on one's life, i.e. one's (positive) actions, the results of one's activities, health, wealth, life, death etc. — and, as Chrysippus and the tradition had done, the impressions themselves (Bobzien *op.cit.* p.370)

[15] So, for example 1.22.10, where the *prohairesis* and the *prohairetika erga* are contrasted with a list of things outwith our power similar to that found in *Ench.*1: '...the body, the parts of the body, possessions, parents, brothers, children, mother-land, and, altogether those things which are 'associated' (*koinônoi*) with us'

away, nor impose any of them which we do not wish, where is the ground for agonizing.' (2.13.10)

The good for man, as we saw in the previous chapter, is the right state of the *prohairesis* and the right use of impressions (1.30.4). Only that which is 'within our power' is good or evil (2.5.4-5; *Ench.* 32.1), anything which is outwith our power is merely indifferent (1.30.3)[16]. This has two main consequences, as Epictetus reminds us. First of all the good is achievable and the evil avoidable. So the aim of appetence is to succeed, and the aim of aversion is not to fall into that which one averts (*Ench.* 2.1; cf. 1.4.11 where this is our *ergon*). The second consequence is that the definition of what is within one's power and what is not is a criterion for distinguishing whether something falls into the domain of good or evil or into the domain of indifference (*Ench.*1.5; 4.10.3). When one desires to know if something should have one's whole-hearted commitment, one can ask oneself, 'Can I achieve this? Might anything which is not of myself hinder it?' If the answer to the first question is 'Yes', then the matter requires our attention and commitment. If not, then we must not believe it either to be something to be sought or avoided with any real fervour. We can see, then, why it is that, as Suzanne Bobzien points out, Epictetus concerns himself not so much with what is in our power or 'the "in our power"', (*to eph'hêmin*) which is the preoccupation of the earlier Stoics, but rather with *ta eph'-hêmin*, 'the things which are within our power'[17]. At a practical level it is important to *know* what is within our power, so that we can take the appropriate moral view of the status of our conduct. Once again we see Epictetus' pre-occupation with the *prokoptôn* and the path he or she must follow.

3.3.2 As we saw in the first section of the chapter, Epictetus defines what is within our power in terms of mental functions (*Ench.* 1.1). These functions come under the purview of the *prohairesis*: they are rational uses of impressions. In this respect,

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[16] While external things are indifferent, their 'use', which is within our power is not indifferent, but a potential source of good and evil to us(3.3.8), since it involves the exercise of the *prohairesis* (2.5.6).

[17] *op.cit.* p.367

Epictetus is loyal to the theory of the earlier Stoics which represents such mental acts as 'assents' to impressions. 'Use of impressions' includes both impulse and assent (1.1.12), as well as a range of other functions which are varieties of these in the early Stoic account. This corresponds neatly, therefore with Chrysippus' insistence that what is within our power are the act of assent and the cognate act of impulse. However, Epictetus' discussion of 'use of impressions', as we shall see in further detail when we come to discuss his epistemology in a later chapter, goes further than the actual act of assent itself. In includes, at least for human beings, all the reasoning processes which prepare the mind for that act. Although Epictetus tends to refer to this faculty simply as the 'use of impressions', he does insist that, in speaking of men and women in this context, he is referring to the 'rational' use of impressions (1.6.13; 2.8.8). So what is in our power is not only to respond to an impression in a variety of ways, but in fact to do so intelligently and rationally. This is not simply a reflex or instinctive reaction, but an ability to 'understand' and 'distinguish' different impressions (1.6.18). Epictetus re-emphasises the distinction between the genuine rational assent to a 'rational impression', which the earlier Stoics considered distinctive of human beings and the essence of what was 'within our power', and the simple *quasi*-assent of animals. Just as in the hierarchy of responses to outside stimulus which we find in the account in Alexander, it is only the highest response which is truly 'within the power' of the creature exercising it (183.30ff), so Epictetus reminds us that 'use of impressions' distinguishes animals from plants, and 'rational use of impressions' or 'use of impressions with understanding' distinguishes human beings, whose function is to be a 'spectator of God and his works' (1.6.19) from the irrational animal, who responds simply as he can to the impression presented to him:

> 'Of this kind is the constitution of the intellect (*dianoia*), according to which, when we hit upon the objects of sense, we are not simply impressed by them, but we pick out something, and subtract and add and combine these very things through them, and, by Zeus move from some of them to others which are related in some way; are these not enough to stir up people and convert them towards not leaving out the artificer' (1.6.10)

This passage, a defence of God as creative nature, shows how the use of impressions

involves a complex consideration of different impressions together, and the application of different concepts to them to discern them, a feature which is unique to man and which is an important expression of human nature.

Rationality and complexity of response to an impression is the essence of what is 'within our power'. As with the early Stoics, however, the impression itself is outwith our power. Although, in some sense the nature of the impression is determined by the nature of the *hêgemonikon*[18], the *fact* of the impression, and its propositional content, are outwith our power. Epictetus reiterates the Stoic belief that our mental processes, such as impulse, require the stimulus of an impression. At 3.22.42-3, we find that no-one can compel us to assent to the false or refuse assent to the true but:

> '"Here you see that there is something in you which is free by nature. Which of you is able to exercise appetence or aversion or impulse or rejection or prepare or set something before yourself unless he receives an impression of the profitable or not appropriate?"'

So there is freedom to respond to an impression, and call up other impressions to aid our rational response, but not to think or act with no stimulus at all. Epictetus speaks of the impression as 'biting' us (3.24.108), against which we must fight with reason if it is not to 'grow strong'. In another well-known passage (Fr.9 = Gellius *N.A.* 19.1.15) Epictetus is taken as the exemplar of the Stoic doctrine of the temporary effect on the soul of an impression which has not yet been assented to. When the soul is struck by an impression, it is not subject to the will, but the impression has a 'power' (*vi*) of its own. Assents are, however, in our power.

This view is underlined by the terminology which Epictetus uses. The presence of an impression, prior to assent is a *pathos*, a 'feeling'[19], and we are said, for

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[18] The fact that it is a rational impression is determined by the fact of there being a rational *hêgemonikon,* and there is some evidence that one's disposition and knowledge colours the impression received (DL 7.51)

[19] 1.2.3; 1.18.1-2; 1.18.3&13; 1.29.7; 2.15.7. cf. [Aëtius] 4.12.1 = *SVF* 2.54. This *pathos* must be distinguished from the 'passion' which is such a feature of Stoic psychology. A 'passion', such as anger or fear is an assent to impression which is false, or a weak assent, which results in psychological damage and physiological by-products.

example to 'feel' (*paschein*) that something is or is not the case. Such a feeling, depending on its strength, is capable of playing a rôle in inducing assent. So, when a man 'feels' that it is rational to be hanged, he goes and hangs himself (1.2.3). Likewise, it is impossible for someone to have a 'feeling', which is blatantly counterfactual (1.28.3). Epictetus tells us that 'feeling that something is the case' is the 'beginning' of assenting to it (1.18.1 cf. 3.3.2-4). Likewise, we are told that it is impossible to judge something to be expedient (*sympheron*) and to be impelled towards something else (1.18.2 cf. Fr. 6.2). This passive feeling lies at the beginning of judgement (*krinein*) and impulse.

This feeling, however, is not an assent; it is not a commitment to the impression, it is not an actual belief. It is when the impression is 'used' or assented to, that beliefs are formed. It is at this point in the process that what is in our power comes into play. Epictetus places great emphasis on the importance of not reacting at once to an impression in the way that it leads us (*Ench.* 34). He re-iterates the early Stoic warnings against assenting precipitatively, which had always been regarded as a source of potential disaster:

> '"Why do you agonize? *It is within your power.* Be secure.
> Don't leap into assenting before applying the natural canon."' (4.10.3)

Instead, he advocates waiting before assent, testing impressions, being sure that one is acting rightly in offering assent (1.20.7). In doing so one can engage in a wide variety of exercises of comparison of impressions with already-held views, concepts, and particularly preconceptions, for which Epictetus has a particularly high regard[20]. It is reason (*logos*) which we are to bring up to combat the impression which is seeking to lead us astray[21], and reason is, as he says elsewhere, a 'system' of impressions. A better impression, says Epictetus, can always be brought up against another

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[20] 'What then, did not Socrates write? And who more? But how? Since he could not have someone always to hand to test his judgements or to be tested in turn, he refuted himself and examined and always had one or another preconception which he was exercising usefully' (2.1.32)

[21] 2.18.11. Note that this application of reason restores the *hêgemonikon* to its position of government.

impression, if we have an appropriate judgement in store. This mental searching of the mind is always within our power, however much impressions may act with force upon us. There is no circumstance in which Epictetus could imagine that the external impression could ultimately be the principal or perfect cause of our assent to an impression. As he himself remarks, it is judgement (*dogma*) which compels (or necessitates) judgement, and *prohairesis prohairesis* (1.17.26; cf. 2.23.19).

3.3.3 We observed that one of the strategies which was used by the earlier Stoics to defend *eph'hêmin* was the rôle played as a cause in the assent to an impression by one's individual character, something which was influenced by capacities granted to us, but which we modified in time by our assents to impressions. In Epictetus system this rôle is played by the *prohairesis*. Moral progress, as we saw in the previous chapter, lies in the development of the *prohairesis*. This development lies in the 'use of impressions', in this respect the 'making of judgements' (*dogmata*):

> 'Judgements about the materials[22], if they be right, make the *prohairesis* good, but if they are crooked and twisted, they make it bad.' (1.19.3)

The replacement of judgements with better judgements, a process which Epictetus calls 'purification' is what is required of us (4.11.8 cf. 3.1.42); it is threateningly implied that better judgements can be replaced by worse, if care and attention is not applied. Well established judgements become 'stronger' when a further assent to the corresponding impression takes place (2.18.7). This can make the soul stronger and more developed, but also can create difficult to excise 'bad' judgements, connected with 'passion'(2.18.11). The judgements which we have, and the degree of 'purity' in them, is the determining factor in our exercise of the intellectual functions which we saw to be subject to the *prohairesis*. 'The exercise of impulse and rejection, appetence and aversion, preparation, purpose and assent' (6.11.6) all derive their 'purity' or 'impurity' from the state of the judgements which lie behind them and are one of the causes of their exercise. It is with these judgements, it would appear that

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[22] ie. external things, which, though indifferent in themselves are the objects about which we make judgements in order for the *prohairesis* to find its 'own particular good' (*ibid.* §§ 1-10)

we compare incoming impressions, in order to 'use' them properly.

Epictetus insists that the 'bad' judgements, those which bring about impurity, *can* be overcome. It is possible for someone to 'repent' as it were, and to begin the process of overcoming these judgements with better ones. It may be difficult to do so, indeed, Epictetus seems to suggest that, under extreme circumstances it is impossible[23]. But this does not detract from the insistence that our character is within our power and entirely our responsibility. The aim of 'stability' is always within our power (4.10.3; Fr.4), and it is working at the *prohairesis* makes us 'unhinderable' (1.4.18). It is also the only thing for which we are ultimately responsible (1.12.34).

Likewise, Epictetus agrees with his predecessors that capacities granted to us by God and Nature determine our character to some extent. Different people have different capacities (*paraskeuai*), which enable them to achieve different things:

> 'For who is there that, having 'conceived' and been full of such great judgements, does not perceive his own capability (*paraskeuê*) and is thus impelled towards the appropriate tasks? But a bull is not ignorant of his own nature and capability (*paraskeuê*) when some wild animal appears nor does he await someone to urge him on, nor a dog, when it sees one of the wild animals. If I have the capability of a good man, shall I wait, so that you can prepare me for my own works? But now I don't have it, believe me. Why, then, do you wish me to dry up before my time, as you have dried out completely yourself.' (4.8.41-3 cf. 1.7.28).

However, Epictetus always insists that we must operate within the framework of our capacities, we must all seek the same aim within that framework: having the *prohairesis* in the right state. It is our responsibility to understand where our own particular capabilities lie, so that we may act accordingly (2.6.3; 3.22.109). Whatever our particular capabilities may be, we are required to make the appropriate judgements

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[23] So, he tells us that while we are under the immediate influence of frustrated passion, we cannot take advantage of the things which are within our power: they are not at that point available (*paresti soi*) to us (*Ench.* 2.2). This situation arises from lack of attention: if we let go of our wits, it is not possible for us to recall them, to apply them to appropriate things (4.12.6).

in order to develop them, and the *prohairesis* in general[24]. We cannot therefore claim that because some of our mental capacities are determined by God that our character is in anyway outwith our control. Epictetus presumably is not convinced by the idea associated with Chrysippus, that congenital influences are *causae principales* of our character (Cic *Fat.* 9). This is significant in respect of the emphasis which Epictetus places on the character in the form of our 'judgements' as the determining factor in much of our behaviour (1.11.33; 1.16.26; 2.1.21; *Ench.* 5). Nothing about the world of the *prohairesis* is ultimately outwith our power, and in this domain we have freedom and complete responsibility.

Prohairesis, and the use of impressions then, is not only *what* is within our power in the sense of an activity or faculty, but also the object of that activity. Our character is the object as well as the subject of successful 'use of impressions'; it is this which we are seeking to purify. As we have seen, Epictetus allows us complete control over this: it is entirely in our power that it should be good or bad. Those things which are external or indifferent, on the other hand are not in our power at all. Our task in life is to become free, by concentrating all our efforts on the achievement of that state which itself is freedom (1.12.8-9), a state which is the fruit of our proper judgements (2.1.21f).

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[24] According to Stobaeus (2.63.25-64.12 = Panaetius fr.109), Panaetius makes a similar point: he claims that everyone has the same second-order aim, as it were, to live life in harmony with nature, but that they have different first-order aims in doing so. Everyone seeks to hit the target, but different people hit different parts of it.

3.4.1 If, as we have observed, the *prohairesis* and the 'use of impressions' are considered to be 'unhindered', and 'non-necessitated', then we shall have to look in more detail at what Epictetus considers the relation between the mind and 'external' fate or necessity. As we saw, Chrysippus took the view that the non-necessitation, as it were, of the acts of the mind presupposed that, although part of the chain of causes, the assents of the human mind were not uniform or externally predictable, as was the case with inanimate objects, or with non-rational animals. This distinction allowed him to argue that in some sense, our responses to impressions and the actions which result from them have a different history of causation from the ordinary events of the world. This difference of history corresponds to the two 'domains' of Epictetus' account of what is within our power. In Epictetus, we find that what is non-necessitated (*ananankaston*) and unhindered (*akôlyton*) is the *prohairesis*, or the rational 'use of impressions' (eg. 1.6.40; 3.3.10), which includes those functions which Chrysippus regarded as attributable to individual minds, and from which our responsible actions sprang: assent and impulse[25]. These faculties, says Epictetus, God has given us so that they are 'free' and 'entirely your own' (1.6.41). In this respect, then, they are contrasted, as we saw in the previous section, with what is 'alien', that which does not belong to us and is external to us, including, as Epictetus reminds us, the body itself.

That everything external to the *prohairesis* and its activities is subject to this necessity is confirmed by Epictetus elsewhere. Reminding us to take no thought for the way the wind blows, since God has not made us steward of the winds, Epictetus remarks:

> '"What then (sc. should be our concern)?" We must arrange what is within our power as best we can and make use of other things as nature directs. "How then does nature direct?" As God wills.' (1.1.17)

Epictetus reaffirms the Stoic doctrine that God acts in the world as Nature and Fate, guaranteeing all that comes to pass. There seems no obvious reason not to conclude

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[25] Epictetus has assent and impulse specifically 'unhindered' at 4.1.69. In the following section he tells us that impulse is not subject to external compulsion, but the term used is *anankasai*, which, of course, could equally apply to necessity.

that Epictetus accepted the orthodox identification of God and Nature with necessity. In a fragment attributed to his teacher Rufus which we may presume Epictetus to have agreed with, since, according to Stobaeus it was transmitted through him, we find the following claim:

> 'Such was and shall be the nature of the cosmos, and events could not have come about other than as they now are.' (Fr.8)

This is a clear statement of the fate and necessity theorem of classical Stoicism. The passage concludes by asserting that a balanced and cultured life requires that we turn our minds to accepting these *anankaia*.

Given this association of necessity with the totality of events in the world outwith our own minds and the things which they control, we can now defend our translation of *ananankastos* in this context as *non-necessitated*, rather than the 'uncompelled' which Oldfather prefers. 'Uncompelled' would refer only to the fact that what is defined as being 'within our power' cannot include such things as may be forced upon us by other persons; it would simply inform us that we cannot be required against our will to think that grass is purple. Epictetus does make this point frequently, as we shall see later on. However, he goes further than this: he informs us that the operations of our mind are not *necessary*: they do not fall out inevitably according to some ineluctable pattern. This, of course, was also the view of Chrysippus and the earlier Stoics. Assent and impulse were free of *necessitas fati*. So far Epictetus seems to have claimed nothing further.

How does it come to be that the prohairesis is free and non-necessitated (2.15.1), whereas other parts of the body, for example, are subject to necessity (4.1.78 for the hand)? Epictetus contrasts 'prohairetic' things, the things which are within the domain of the *prohairesis* and what it can control with things which have been subjected by God to the 'recurrence (*periodos*) of all things' (4.1.100). It was one of the features of the Stoic doctrine of the causal nexus that it was supposed to guarantee this everlasting recurrence: since the same causes would arise in each 'period', it followed that the same events would recur (Nemesius *Nat. Hom.* 309.5-311.2 = *SVF.* 2.625; Eusebius *Prep. Evang.* 15.19.1-2 = *SVF.* 599). Epictetus clearly signals his belief that those things which are here described as outwith our power — property, goods, house, children and wife — are inevitably subject to this

recurrence, and by inference to the causal nexus which guarantees it, while one's *prohairesis*, if not independent of that nexus, is at least 'free' of it. This is a startling conclusion for a Stoic. Epictetus seems to be suggesting, that while our lives are predetermined (cf. fr.8, cited above), the inner life of the mind is at least potentially free of such determination.

3.4.2 What is the relevance, then, of Epictetus' claim that God *could* not put the body into our power, whereas he cannot but *refrain* from reserving to himself any control over our minds? Our body, he tells us is 'not your own, but only clay cleverly mixed together' (1.1.12). In place of giving us our body under our control, God has given us the faculty which makes use of impressions, which, if we treat it and its objects properly, will result in our never being hindered or obstructed (*ibid.* §13). In other words, the part of us which is, according to Epictetus' doctrine unhindered by God's activities as necessity, is the part of us which is most intimately related to him, and, as Epictetus reminds us elsewhere, actually a part of him (1.17.27). This seems at first sight peculiar — one would have expected, if anything that this would be the part most under divine control — but Epictetus emphasises that the significant point is that we are happy in the right use of impressions since it is in this way that God is happy (3.3.10). In other words, the free use of impressions, the ability to react appropriately to one's perception of oneself and the external world is the most significant feature of God's life. It is through the proper exercise of this function that we have 'freedom, smooth flow of life, cheerfulness, stability' and furthermore 'justice law and right (*sôphrosynê*)'(Fr.4). These are the standard attributes of God and the wise man in Stoicism, and reinforce the important Stoic belief that God and the wise man share the same kind of life (Plut. *Comm. Not.* 1076a). Where his life differs from ours is that his encompasses all the events of the world, and to him all material is tractable. For man, however no material is ultimately tractable, since it is involved in the life of God. So Epictetus continually emphasises that we are to concern ourselves only with what is within our power and resign everything else to

him[26]. Our minds are parts of God, but our lives are so bound up in the overall life of God which includes the other parts of him, that we cannot have absolute control even over the body:

> 'Everything obeys and is subject to the Cosmos: earth and sea and the sun and the other stars and the plants and animals of the earth. Even our body obeys it both in being ill and being in health, whenever the Cosmos wishes it, and in being young and old and passing through the other changes of life. So it is reasonable that that which is within our power, to wit judgement (*krisin*) should not be alone in striving against it. For it is powerful and greater than we are and has deliberated better for our benefit, by administering us together with all things. In addition to this, acting against it is to be with the irrational and does nothing more than making us emptily confused and falling into pains and miseries' (fr.3)

Although we are like God, and find our perfection in the same field, he is our superior by virtue of his all-encompassing nature[27]. It is in reason that we are equal to the Gods, in no other part (1.12.26). The greatness of reason, Epictetus tells us, lies in judgements (*ibid.*), the mental development which will bring us closer to the disposition of the wise man, but in respect of our bodies we are merely part of the whole. Thus Epictetus underpins his notion that only the mind could be free from necessity by pointing to our only being a part of a whole which is perfectly ordered by God, nature and necessity. This is a wider whole and a greater intelligence which governs all things and makes use of all things, and is, as it were, the 'soul' of the whole world, including our bodies. It must, therefore, necessitate the lives of those bodies, and bring salient causes to bear upon them. Why it does not necessitate our minds is less clear, but must surely, as we have suggested, be connected with the fact that they are of the same nature as itself (3.3.10). If for the most part, they lack the

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[26] In the Rufus fragment alluded to above (fr.4) we resign to the cosmos those things *of which it has need*: that is to say that which is not within our power. The life of God encompasses everything which is external to us.

[27] So, Epictetus reminds us that we do not have a *dynamis* equal to Zeus, since we cannot 'follow' (*parakolouthein*) all things at the same time (1.14.11).

complete state of blessedness, it is because of their being unable to 'follow' all things.

For this reason, we often find ourselves at variance with God; we desire things which are not truly good, we fear and seek to avoid things which are not truly evil, and in these respects our will is at variance with his. Given the necessity of events in the external world, however, this is a futile struggle, as the passage cited above (Fr.3) indicates, and we only fall into a passionate state. If, on the other hand, we have our own will in accordance with the will of God, then it matters not that we have no absolute control over the body or our actions: what we wish to do or to happen to us will happen in any case, since our will is God's, and he will achieve his purpose (1.17.28). The free man, as Epictetus reminds us, 'lives as he wishes' and is not subject to being 'necessitated, hindered or forced' (4.1.1).

3.4.3 Necessity, therefore, need have no influence in our inner mental life, the life which Epictetus regards as the truly significant: the *prohairesis* and use of impressions are wholly within our power and *ananankaston*. However, that it *need* not, does not require that it *will* not. On the contrary, Epictetus insists that the soul which does not concern itself properly with its own welfare to the exclusion of 'externals' will be subject to a kind of necessity. If something is outwith our power, necessity requires that it be neither good nor evil, and therefore not a proper object of concern (*Ench.* 32.1). So, if we pay attention, Epictetus says, to things outwith the domain of the *prohairesis*, then 'all necessity' (*pasa anankê*) requires that, for example, we shall pay attention to tyrants (1.19.17). More generally, if we desire, or for that matter desire to avoid things which are in the power of another, then, in some sense we have enslaved ourselves to him (1.4.18ff; 2.1.12; 3.22.61). By contrast, the attitude of the properly disposed man to the tyrant, or someone else who claims power over him is 'You bind my leg, but not even Zeus can overcome my *prohairesis*' (1.1.23 cf. 3.24.67ff).

That we shall be hindered, as Epictetus points out, in pursuing something which is in the power of others, is of course trivially true (4.1.64). But Epictetus is going further here. He is speaking of a kind of psychological necessity; an necessity which ensures that, just as there is a nexus of causation in the external world, so the activity of the mind has appropriate consequences *for the mind*. So, Epictetus tells us

that:

> 'If judgements are the causes of everything, and someone has base judgements, whatever the cause is, the outcome will be of the same kind.' (3.9.4)

We cultivate the tyrant, says Epictetus, 'whenever we take up absurd judgements concerning things outwith the domain of the *prohairesis* as being goods and evils' (1.19.16). The continued independence of the *prohairesis* is dependent on its continued health[28]. If one assents to an impression in such a way that one is drawn to desire or fear something outwith one's power, then one is drawn into necessity itself. One has surrendered to the causal chain. The *hêgemonikon* of the bad man, as Epictetus reminds us, is prey to externals (2.22.25).

This idea is connected, both with Epictetus' pathology and also with careless or precipitate assent or use of impressions. If we assent without proper care, without examining the impression to see whether it is appropriate, then we shall, as Epictetus has it, be 'carried away' by it. This is an extension of an idea which in the early Stoa was associated with passions, and refers to the difficulty of recovery of the stable mind once the passion has taken hold and acquired a 'force'. Epictetus applies this to precipitate assent. If we assent without proper care and attention, then we have assented according to the 'force' of the impression: its attractiveness or seductiveness. We have not 'used' the impression, but it has used us. We are therefore subject to its effects.

Explained in terms of the Chrysippean theory of causation, it would seem that what happens here is that the mind does not accept the rôle of principal cause, but allows itself to be a procatarctic cause in some sense. It is the impression, which is the determining cause, and not the mind. The mind simply assents to the impression without consideration, something which, as we have seen, is a denial of our human nature. It comes about, as Epictetus tell us, from lack of attention (*prosochê* 4.12.6). However, it must not be overlooked that this is a voluntary surrender, as it were. Just as Epictetus tells us that nothing can hinder the *prohairesis* but itself perverting itself

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[28] cf. Aulus Gellius *NA.* 7.2.7 where the extent of fate's involvement in our decisions depends on the quality of our mind.

(2.23.19), so, significantly, it is an voluntary act of one's own mind which triggers this submission to external necessity. When the fear of death causes us to submit to another, it is the case in fact, says Epictetus that:

> 'Once again your own judgement compelled (or necessitated: *ênankasen*) you, that is to say *prohairesis* compelled *prohairesis*.' (1.17.26)

In other words, to allow itself to be hindered or necessitated requires that it make a wrong choice, a choice which it is within its power to make otherwise: 'If you wish, you will be free' (1.17.28). We thus 'subject' the *prohairesis* and thereby make ourselves subject to external events (4.13.21). So Seneca tells us, in the *De Ira* (2.3.1) that passion arises not from being moved (*moveri*) by impressions, but rather by surrendering to them (*permittere*) and 'following the chance motion'. We do not become subject to necessity or the compulsion of others except through our own choice.

3.4.4 In this discussion, we have seen that lack of hindrance and impediment is spoken of as being a quality of the mind as often as non-necessitation, and in the same context. Just as we cannot be subject to necessity when we exercise the mind in pursuit of its proper object: its own welfare, so we cannot be hindered or obstructed. Given the clear distinction which Epictetus makes between what is within our power and what is not, between the *prohairesis* and its domain on the one hand, and 'externals' on the other, one might wonder whether there is no causal connection whatsoever between one's decisions and one's actions. Is there no sense in which what we do (or, as it were, our bodies do) is according to our own choice? Epictetus clearly does not express such a responsibility in terms of *eph'hêmin*, but it is not clear that there is no causal relation involved. He tells us, significantly, that we may attribute a man's actions to his judgements and suppositions, by way of a cause:

> 'Altogether, then, neither death not exile nor difficulty nor any of such other things is the cause of our doing anything or not doing anything, but rather our suppositions (*hypolêpseis*) and judgements (*dogmata*).' (1.11.33; cf. 4.8.3).

Likewise, at 3.9.3 and *Ench.* 45, it seems that actual bodily actions can, under

normal circumstances be attributed to one's judgements. What is being emphasised, however, is that without the complete freedom which Epictetus ascribes to actions involving only the use of impressions itself, one cannot genuinely speak of *eph'hêmin*.

A similar picture emerges from Epictetus' teaching on reservation. This is a feature of Stoic teaching which sought to prevent the frustration of the soul, when external hindrance prevented an action from taking place. As well as assenting to the impression which brings about the impulse, one assents to another impression along the lines of 'if it be not hindered' (cf. Seneca *Ben.* 4.34.4). This fits well with Epictetus' idea that the impulse can never be hindered *per se*, but that the resulting action is always subject to hindrance (4.1.73), and he commends the practice. Appetence, the desire for something as a good, is to be set aside altogether by the inexperienced philosopher and impulse is to be employed 'lightly', without complete 'straining after' (*Ench.* 2; 27.3):

> 'Another's grief is alien to me, but mine is my own. I will bring my own to an end with complete commitment (*ex hapantos*), for it is within my power; as for that which is alien, I will attempt it as far as possible (*kata dynamin*), but I will not attempt it with complete commitment. Otherwise, I shall fight against God, I shall be setting myself against Zeus, I shall be arraying myself against him in respect of the universe.' (3.24.23-4)

The consequence, Epictetus goes on to say, will be the frustration and passion of which we have already spoken. We are to use impulse in the pursuit of things which are not within our power, if for example our body has need of them, but we are to accompany them with a 'right judgement' (4.8.3). Then we shall have acted properly. Whether we achieve the object of the impulse is morally irrelevant, what is morally relevant is that we judged it not to be a good and were prepared for its not succeeding. We are told by Epictetus that we are to subject our impulse to God (4.1.89). That is to say that in remembering at all times that all things external to ourselves are outwith our power and within his, we do not rebel against him by wanting these things as if they were our own (2.16.28).

This, is the practical side of Epictetus' view of causation. Our impulse is never to be considered the complete cause of our action, and we are not even to have

confidence in its being the principal cause in every circumstance. However, given the other evidence which we have from Epictetus of how our external actions are not within our power, it is difficult to conclude that this can always be the 'principal' cause of which Chrysippus spoke. Rather we are compelled to conclude that it is frequently some kind of weaker 'combined-cause'. Only that which can be considered to be an absolutely free action, what Chrysippus would designate as being the act of our mind as a 'complete' (*autoteles*) cause, can be within our power in Epictetus' system. That is not to say, as we have seen, that we cannot bring about other events, but we cannot infallibly guarantee this, and this, as far as Epictetus, who is concerned about absolute freedom within the mind, is concerned, is the significant factor[29]. He describes those things which are outwith our power as 'weak' (*Ench.* 1.2). In other words, our external actions do not arise from a causal history over which we have complete control.

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[29] cf. Bobzien *op.cit.* p.370

3.5 By way of conclusion, therefore, we can make a number of observations on Epictetus' view of *eph'hêmin* in respect of the position of the earlier Stoics. There are clear similarities: Epictetus accepts that what is within our power is a response to an impression which is itself not in our power. This response is not necessitated by fate, God or any other person. There is also an emphasis on the significance of one's own character as the chief determinant of the assent. However, there are also differences: Epictetus places greater emphasis on the sharp distinction of two domains of our lives from our perspective. He is concerned less with responsibility for external actions, which he does not think can be reliably ascribed. Furthermore, he places far more emphasis on our freedom in respect of 'using impressions' — although he agrees that the mind requires the stimulus of an impression, he has much more to say about the processes of thought which we can enter into. Whereas Epictetus, like the earlier Stoics, sees freedom lying only in the life and perfect disposition of the wise man, unlike them he does not consider anything to be in our power which is outwith the domain in which we are free, so that there is a more intimate relation between and what is within our power and how we are free. He seems to be responding to the criticisms of Peripatetics like Alexander who insisted that the concept of something's being within our power depended upon the freedom to do the opposite of what we actually do. Epictetus thinks that such a freedom does exist in the mental domain, but not in the external domain of bodily action. It is no longer simply a question of removing necessity from assent in order to justify responsibility for action. This reflects in the emphasis which he places on our active response to impressions: for him assent is the 'use' of an impression, not a 'yielding' (DL 7.49)

Epictetus is also interested in extending the causal chain out from the assent and determining what is within our power from that perspective: it is in this area that he talks most about necessity. It is here, and not in the chain up to the assent that he believes *eph'hêmin* to be vulnerable and it is here that he makes his distinctive contribution. We can assent one way or another, but we cannot guarantee that we can act in the external world at all. When the earlier Stoics wanted to demonstrate that right action lay in the firmly resolved intention to do the right thing, they used the image of an archer who strives to take the right aim and hit the target, but may be externally prevented (Cic. *Fin.* 3.22 cf. Plut. *Comm. Not.* 1070de). Were Epictetus

exploiting this simile, he would probably have argued that the archer could not even rely on his body responding to the intention at all.

Chapter 4: *Prohairesis* and the Self.

4.1.1 One of the most striking features of how Epictetus speaks of *prohairesis* is found on the occasions when he addresses a pupil (and thereby the reader) with the statement 'You are *prohairesis*' (3.1.40; 4.5.12). On the first-mentioned of these occasions, as elsewhere (eg. 3.18.3), the point of comparison is with various things which Epictetus classes in the category of 'externals', 'flesh' and 'hair'. 'We' it seems, are not these things[1]. The 'self', what 'I' am, is identified with the mind or soul rather than the body. For a Stoic materialist, this seems to be a peculiar view to have taken, particularly as we have, in a previous chapter, acquitted Epictetus from the charge of having detached an immaterial or transcendental soul from the body. Yet we have already established that *prohairesis* represents a range of mental and spiritual functions. To distinguish *prohairesis* as 'the self' from the body and its parts, therefore, has to be accomplished, for Epictetus, within the context of the material unity of body and soul. What we shall discover is that Epictetus seeks to achieve this by reflecting further on the moral and intellectual orientation of the soul itself.

We are already familiar with the idea of the orientation of our interest towards the things of the soul[2], and in particular the *prohairesis*, as being our principal interest; that the goods and pleasures of the soul are superior to those of the body, and that it is by being properly oriented in this respect that we fulfil our capacity for rational use of impressions which distinguishes us as human beings. The body, as we saw, is common with animals and the rational soul and intelligence with the gods, and we must 'incline' towards one or other of these features of human nature (1.3.3)[3]. Different 'constitutions' (*kataskeuai*) have different ends (1.6.16), and each kind of creature is *kalon* when it achieves the excellence which belongs to its own nature

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[1] At 1.1.22 where the tyrant can fetter my leg, but not *me*, and 1.29.16 where Anytus and Meletus can harm Socrates' body but not himself.

[2] It is our most valuable possession (2.12.20ff) and is therefore the object of our peculiar care.

[3] 1.6.14 tells us that it is sufficient for animals to exercise bodily functions, but human nature demands that we act 'appropriately and methodically'.

(3.1.3)[4]. So, as we saw in an earlier chapter, this proper orientation towards the internal life is the first stage towards our progress towards the human end.

However, elsewhere, Epictetus takes this idea further. There are three objects of this inclination or orientation, the flesh, the *prohairesis*, and externals, and that feature to which we incline will be dominant within us (*kyrieuon*). It will determine the orientation of our moral interest, and concern (2.22.19ff)[5]. This is presented, however, as a gloss on the idea that we must incline towards that aspect where we can say 'I' and 'mine' (§ 19). So, Epictetus tells us that this is not simply a moral orientation or determination of priority, but actually a way of delineating the self. 'I', says Epictetus, 'am not a body or property or reputation, but a rational animal' (4.6.34). That aspect of us which we value most and on which we concentrate our concern and care, is what we *are* as far as we are concerned[6]. The properly-oriented self is located in the *prohairesis*, and if the self is located here, then, although this is self-interest, it nonetheless facilitates the proper exercise of our relations with other things and people (§ 20) in a way which we shall discuss further in due course.

Thus far, we might get the impression that Epictetus is concerned only with locating a *sense* of self, rather than its true location. But Epictetus has elsewhere insisted that we ***are*** *prohairesis*, so that the seat of selfhood lies in the *hêgemonikon* and its disposition and activity. It is difficult to see how it can be claimed at the same time that the man who is oriented towards the physical at the expense of the mental *actually* has his self located in the body. However, we have already laid the ground for the distinction between the sense of self and its actual location in our discussion of what is within our power in the previous chapter. If our orientation is such that we concern ourselves too much with externals, then, according to Epictetus, we are enslaved. Yet it is only by the free choice of the *prohairesis* that we find ourselves

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[4] Thus we should destroy the man in us by failing to fulfil the *epangelia* of man: the rational life (2.9.1).

[5] This passage is relevant to Epictetus' interpretation of the Stoic theory of 'appropriation' (*oikeiôsis*, cf. § 15). We shall return in due course to consider it in this context.

[6] We must work either to improve the *hêgemonikon* or externals — it is not possible to attend fully to both of these domains of activity (*Ench.* 29.7).

in this condition — it is not the body which is the source of evil, but the '*prohairesis* corrupting itself'[7]. We may conclude, therefore, given the connection between this orientation and the sense of self, that, analogously, the doctrine takes the following form: the true self is located in the *prohairesis*, but that, if we have self-interest improperly directed, then we shall act and think as though the self were located in the body. We shall thereby betray and even damage the true self, but that in itself will be an action of the true self located in the *prohairesis*. In other words, for our *sense of* self to be located in the body is an error of the *true* self. So, Epictetus insists, the teacher who insists that we are nothing but 'corpses' is promulgating a doctrine that is false and dangerous for his pupils (1.9.19); the truth is rather that we are kinsmen of the gods (§ 25), a relation which Epictetus associates with our rational nature, and encourages us to cultivate by orienting ourselves towards and developing that aspect of our nature.

This is an important point to bear in mind from the outset, as it demonstrates Epictetus' being at variance with the teaching of the early Stoics — or at least the standard modern interpretation of that teaching — which argues that they identified the self with a complex of body and soul referred to in the sources as a *systasis* or constitution (DL 7.85, Hierocles *E.S.* 6.49-53; *constitutio* is the Latin term used by Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 121, *passim*)[8]. Epictetus, by contrast, although he is not dualistic in the sense of regarding the body as a pernicious influence, nonetheless maintains that it is something with which we have a relation more closely analogous to that which we have with some external object than that which we have with our self. He comments, of the hand, for example, that it is 'part of you, but not *yours*' (4.1.78-9). Likewise, I am not to regard my body as *emon* (4.1.158). It seems perplexing, at first sight for Epictetus to suggest that what is 'ours' is closer to us than what is 'part of us'. It would seem to be the case, however, from the context, that Epictetus wishes

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[7] So, by the choice of our orientation, we become 'one person' (*'hena anthrôpon'*; *Ench.* 29.7)

[8] e.g. S.G. Pembroke *'Oikeiosis'* in A.A. Long, (ed.) *Problems in Stoicism* (London 1971); B. Inwood, 'Hierocles, Theory and Argument in the 2nd. Century A.D.', *OSAP.* II (1984), p.173; R.F. Dobbin, *The Sense of Self in Epictetus: Prohairesis and Prosopon* (Berkeley Ph.D thesis 1989), p. iv.

to invest 'mine' with a very specific meaning. Like the equivalent idea of what is unique to us (*to idion*) it is defined by 'that which is within our power'. In other words, Epictetus tells us that, while in the accepted sense the hand is part of us, being a limb of the body, it and its activities are 'outwith our power'[9]. So the body is to be regarded as *allotrion* exactly because it and its affairs are not within our power (4.1.66). The two features which are not the appropriate objects of our inclination, the body and one's property, therefore, are to be regarded as 'alien' (*allotrion*, 4.1.83 & 87)[10]. Epictetus thus distinguishes that which is 'part of us' in the sense of common speech, from what is 'ours' in his own technical sense: that which pertains to the true, unique self.

So, when Epictetus tells us that 'I am not a body or property or reputation, but a rational animal' (4.6.34), he is presenting us with two distinctions: first of all, that the true self lies in our rational nature, expressed by the *prohairesis*; in other words the disposition and activity of the *hêgemonikon* (which is *idion*, 1.26.15). In the second place, this is a normative view of the self — it is possible, indeed likely, that we shall have a *sense* of our self which is other than that centred on the mind, and thus it is our human responsibility to regard the internal life of the mind as the seat of the self and so cultivate it[11].

4.1.2 This brings back into focus another idea which we found to be prominent in the doctrine of *prohairesis*: that it denotes the self-reflective faculty of reason. The 'logical faculty' or faculty which 'uses impressions', as the first chapter of Book 1 of the *Diatribai* emphasises, is the only faculty which 'contemplates both itself and all other things' (§ 4)[12]. This is the feature which, it is claimed, makes this faculty

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[9] it is '....preventible, subject to compulsion, and a slave of everything which is stronger' (4.1.78)

[10] It is thus important to *know* what is *idion*, and what is *allotrion* (4.5.6-7).

[11] So, in the passage referred to above (1.26.15) the 'starting-point of philosophy' is the perception of how one's own *hêgemonikon* is disposed (cf. 3.3.1, where one's own *hêgemonikon* is the 'subject matter of the fine and good man').

[12] Reason is also self-critical (1.20.4-5).

appropriate to be the governing faculty. But it is also that which makes it appropriate to be identified with the self. Only the faculty which contemplated both itself and other things could reflect upon itself as a self, and a self in a place in the world.

Furthermore, as we observed in the previous chapter, it is this faculty alone which the gods gave us to be 'within our power' and *kyrieuon* (1.1.7)[13]. This was a further feature which distinguished it from the body and externals (*ibid.* 9 cf. also 1.22.10). What was fundamentally within our power, according to Epictetus' strict definition of *eph'hêmin*, was the ability to reflect upon our mental and moral disposition and to carry out changes to it, and on the basis of this disposition, to have certain intentions concerning our external activity. We had to be on our guard against the belief that it was within our power to achieve the objects of these intentions. However, the ability to reflect upon our disposition in relation to external things was entirely within our power, and the pursuit of the good required that we attend to this task. What we can now add to what we had concluded in the previous chapter is the observation that the self-reflection of reason and *prohairesis* is *our* self-reflection. When the *prohairesis* acts upon itself to ensure its improvement, it is thereby *we* who are acting upon *ourselves*, and that this is our most significant task and the only one completely within our power.

This is confirmed and developed by what Epictetus has to say about judgements (*dogmata*) and the self. Judgements are, like the *hêgemonikon* itself *idia* (4.4.44). As we saw, just as reason is said to consist of a certain kind of impressions, likewise on of the features of *prohairesis* is that it can be though of as consisting of judgements. The process of ensuring that one has appropriate judgements, by replacing bad ones with good, is thus part of concern for the self (1.19.10). So in the passage referred to above, where we are encouraged to regard ourselves as 'not flesh nor hair, but *prohairesis*' (3.1.40f), we find that, if we ensure that that is *kalê*, then we too will be *kaloi*. How do we make the *prohairesis* to be *kalê*? By eradicating

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[13] The use of this term further confirms our hypothesis that the self is always situated in the *prohairesis*, even when the sense of self lies elsewhere. In 2.22, the term *kyrieuon* was used of the dominance of that element in which the sense of self resided. However, it is clear that the mind is always truly the governing part, and that it is an error of the mind which allows the sense of self and its priorities to lie elsewhere.

worthless judgements (*ibid.* 43). This is reflected in the character or quality which the individual self possesses:

> 'A man is not pointed out by the finger, like a stone or a piece of wood, but whenever someone shows his judgements, then he shows him as a man' (3.2.12)

A significant part of our individuality is our individual moral and intellectual state; the state of our *prohairesis*; our character. In this sense, then, judgements are the self, since they constitute everything which is truly relevant about a person, and that relevant character shines through in the making of judgements, and the actions which stem from them. Moreover, this character is (although also shaped, as we shall see, by innate influences and capacities), in its mature state, mutable by itself and by itself alone. This gives Epictetus' account of *prohairesis* as the self a very strong 'first person' basis, a point admirably elucidated by Robert Dobbin in his Berkeley Ph.D. thesis[14].

These innate capacities, we shall discover, include what Epictetus calls 'preparations' (*paraskeuai*), which are given to us by God, and, as we saw in a previous chapter, are open to development in much the same way as the *prohairesis* itself. These capacities, along with our relations (*scheseis*) determine our *prosôpa*, or social rôles. Our relations and rôles represent, as it were, the face which the self presents to the world, and determine our duties in respect of the world around us. While external action is not entirely 'within our power', it remains the case that, at least in respect of making appropriate judgements about other people and external matters, we have certain duties in maintaining these relations and the rôles which accompany them. As we noted in the previous chapter, if we place the good only in that which is within the domain of *prohairesis*, we shall nonetheless thereby maintain relations and exercise rôles in the appropriate way.

4.1.3 The earlier Stoics, as we noted above, are usually held to have defined the self

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[14] *The Sense of Self in Epictetus, Prohairesis and Prosopon* (Berkeley 1989) pp.7ff.

as a complex of soul and body[15], which is called the *systasis*, or constitution[16]. The view of selfhood which attaches to this constitution is based on the doctrine of *oikeiôsis*, or 'appropriation'. This idea is usually invoked by the Stoics to underlie their ethical system, since it contains an account of how our basic animal and human instincts, expressed in a 'primal impulse' (*prôtê hormê*) undergo a process of development towards rationality, leading eventually to the proper exercise of rational impulse and selection towards proper functions or duties (*kathêkonta*).

However, modern commentators have noted that underlying this argument for the existence of 'natural' ethics, there lies a teaching which could be interpreted as an account of the 'self' and its relation to other people and things external to it. The first *hormê* of an animal is directed towards self-preservation, which Nature makes the appropriate thing for it. Two things must be noted at the outset. First of all, a *hormê* is by definition a response to an impression: therefore the animal is presented right away with an impression that it exists as such (ie. is a self) and that the self is to be

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[15] Hierocles uses the term *syntheton* as a definition of an animal (*Êthikê Stoicheiôsis* 4.38), cf. S.G. Pembroke '*Oikeiosis*' from A.A. Long *Problems in Stoicism* (London 1971); B. Inwood, 'Hierocles, Theory and Argument in the 2nd. Century A.D.' from *OSAP.* II (1984), p.173.

For example, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus' teacher, says that a person is not a soul alone, nor a body alone, but a kind of 'synthesis' of the two (cp.6). However, as we shall go on to demonstrate, a passage which is much relied upon by Pembroke and Inwood, Seneca *Ep.* 121,10, (where it is argued that the constitution is the *hêgemonikon* relatively disposed towards the body), does not support the view of the self as a complex of body and soul.

The dissenter is Voelke (*op.cit.* p.154), who, following Epictetus, claims that the Stoics identified a man with his *logos*.

[16] DL 7.85. cf. Hierocles *E.S.* 6.49-53:

> 'From which this syllogism must necessarily follow, that the animal, taking hold of its first perception, is at once appropriated towards itself and its own constitution'

cf also 7.48-50, where Hierocles insists that this perception takes place 'as soon as the animal is born'. It is significant, when we come to understand the later Stoics, such as Hierocles, Seneca and Epictetus, that he speaks of 'itself and its constitution', where Chrysippus speaks only of the constitution.

preserved[17]. Hence the quotation from Chrysippus that the dearest thing to the animal is its 'constitution and the self-consciousness of it' (DL 7.85). At this stage, of course, this is not a rational reflection, since in those creatures which are rational (ie. human beings), the mind has not yet developed[18].

Secondly, the first initiative in *oikeiôsis* lies with Nature. It is she who disposes the animal in this way[19]. Thus *oikeiôsis* is, in the first instance, part of the providential dispensation, but is also connected with the basic constitution of the animal: not only that which makes it belong to the species which it does and have the appropriate characteristics, but also the characteristics which it has as an individual within that species, as is apparent from the insistence that nature causes it to be appropriated *to itself* (as an individual: oikeiousês *hautôi* tês physeôs)[20].

The objects of this appropriation are the things required for the preservation

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[17] cf. also Hierocles *Êthikê Stoicheiôsis* 1.31, where *aisthêsis* brings us into knowledge of the 'first *oikeion*'.

G.B. Kerferd remarks:

> '*Oikeiosis* is a process by which an organism "comes to terms with itself". It is not a question at this stage of adding to, or extending the self, by the acquisition if things that were not originally present. Rather it is a question of recognition. It is by the exercise of the power to perceive themselves as objects that the "come to terms" with themselves. The process of *oikeiosis* is a process of self-recognition, and it is by self-recognition that a sense of personal identity is achieved.

[18] cf. Kerferd *ibid.*:

> 'Initially, we are told by Seneca, this recognition when achieved by the infant, is not an understanding of *what* his constitution is, he is simply aware *of* his constitution. The same will be the case with an animal — in both cases the perception of the creature's constitution is crude, summary and obscure (*Ep.* 121.11-12). Nonetheless, this perception of itself and its constitution *is* found in all animals, and not merely in some (*Ep.* 121.5).'

[19] cf. S.G. Pembroke, '*Oikeiosis*' from Long, *Problems in Stoicism*, p.116

[20] This point has to be distinguished from the related question of whether one of the functions of appropriation is to orient the creature towards the realization of itself as a particular *nature*, whether plant, animal or human. That this is implied in the doctrine is disputed by White (*op.cit.* 146-149), who suggests that this idea, when it appears in an account in *De Finibus* 5 is a criticism by Antiochus of Ascalon of the earlier Stoics for *not* having adopted it.

of the *systasis* of soul and body. In human beings *logos* eventually develops and becomes the 'craftsman' of impulse. Thus we, in the first instance pursue material necessities, like animals, but as our awareness of the context of these items increases as our discriminatory power to deal with impressions come into play, then Reason becomes the craftsman of impulse[21]. Hence, as we develop from near-animal status to our full human potential, it follows that our pursuit of human needs becomes increasingly a matter of rational selection[22].

4.1.4 This developmental account can be fleshed out by three other testimonia, which in addition to giving us more detail, demonstrate how the doctrine of the self which *oikeiôsis* illustrated develops among later Stoics, including the contemporaries of Epictetus: the opening chapters of Cicero's *De Finibus* III, Seneca *Ep.* 121 and the *Êthikê Stoicheiôsis* of Epictetus' contemporary, Hierocles. Cicero's account begins, as does Diogenes Laërtius' with a description of the first impulse of animals (3.16ff): conservation of the *status* and alienation from things which seem to bring death. Once again we find that the use of *videantur* presupposes that perception is an important part of the process. Animals thus have a 'sensum...sui', a 'perception of themselves' which is necessary to the perception of and appropriation towards those things which are advantageous. Infants 'desire' things which are conducive to health even before they have felt pleasure and pain (3.16). However, it is not possible, it is argued, to

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[21] So, as Voelke suggests, Reason, in man 'transforms' *oikeiosis* (*op.cit.* p.77 cf. Sen *Ep.* 121.14)

[22] Hence, for human beings it is the providentially 'natural' state that we should develop towards the exercise of *logos*, and that that should be one of the distinguishing characteristics of human nature:

> 'All that distinguishes plants from animals, Diogenes continues, is absence of *psychê* (animals have *hormê*) and sensation to regulate the maintenance of their constitution — in plants carried out by Nature. The process itself is natural in both cases....It is equally natural that for human beings, on whom *logos* has been bestowed, living in accordance with *logos* should be the specifically human form for the same process to take. The *logos* supervenes not as the opponent of natural impulse, but as "the technician to take charge of it" (Pembroke, *op.cit.* p.117).

have this desire unless one has the perception of one's self[23] and loves oneself on this basis. The proof given is that no-one, given either option, would not prefer whole limbs to those which are distorted and diminished in their use.

This love for the best state of things inherent in *oikeiôsis*, according to Cicero, extends to the processes of cognition. The sciences (*ibid.*18) in the Stoic theory consist of cognitions (*katalêpseis*)[24] and are established by reason. Nature, as Cicero tells us elsewhere, has given these cognitions as the standard for scientific knowledge, and as the basis upon which the developing mind can understand further sciences and the more complex intellectual dispositions which lead to reason itself[25]. Thus, as Cicero points out, Nature ensures that it is repugnant, even to the child, to assent to what is clearly false. The entire Stoic epistemological system, no less of later Stoics, such as Epictetus, than of their predecessors, depends heavily upon this idea. Epictetus, in a number of places, asserts the importance of the 'natural' tendency of the human mind to assent to the true, which is closely linked, as we shall see, when we come to discuss the relevant passages in greater detail in a later chapter, with the parallel doctrine that we are naturally attracted by the apparent good (3.2.1ff).

The next section of Cicero's account deals in detail with the progression through the human development towards the point at which the good becomes a natural pursuit. When we are first constituted (§ 20), the things which are 'secundum

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[23] [Aëtius] 4.8.7 (= *SVF.* 2.852) describes this self-perception:

> 'The Stoics describe this common perception as an "internal contact", according to which we comprehend ourselves'.

Pembroke (*op.cit.* 119) comments that this 'gives specific sense to the preposition with which the word for consciousness (*synaisthesis*) was constructed (*SVF.* 1.234)'. In other words the ***hêgemonikon***, through the tension of the other soul-*pneuma* stretching out from it, perceives the limits of the body as being in the most immediate contact to it, and thus recognizes the experiences within it as belonging to itself.

[24] That is, assents to cognitive impressions (eg. Sextus *M.* 7.151)

[25] *Academica* 1.42. So, Long and Sedley, commenting on the moral preconceptions:

> 'The content of these preconceptions is likely to be the rudimentary awareness, founded on 'appropriation', that certain things are natural and useful to one's human constitution and others are not.' (*The Hellenistic Philosophers* 1.375)

naturam' (cf. Seneca *Ep.* 121.15) are to be taken up and things which are opposite to them rejected *propter se*, so that the first duty is self-preservation[26]. At the next stage of our development, we learn to hold on to the things which are according to nature and keep the opposites at arm's length. This then develops, as Reason supervenes, into a more formal kind of selection and rejection in which we are conscious of our *officium*, which in time becomes a continuous habit[27]. This latter is the last stage before 'primum inesse incipit et intellegi quid sit quod vere bonum possit dici', the condition of the Stoic 'wise man'[28].

In other words, the pursuit of what the Stoics called 'preferred indifferents' becomes a model of the pursuit of the good: the life of complete virtue according to nature. The life which we begin to lead under the direction of nature leads us to develop the ability — as reason develops — to see what the good is, by realising that it is good to live in this way (Cicero *Fin.* 3.20)[29]. Then, in principle at least, we act in this way because it is good to act in this way: the increasing perception of how nature ordains our lives for the best teaches us the concept of value[30]. Ultimately one develops towards seeing things rightly, as opposed to just acting advantageously:

> 'Man's first appropriation is towards those things which are according to nature. But, at the same time as he takes hold of understanding, or rather a conceptual framework (*notionem*) which they

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[26] cf. Hierocles *ap.* Stob. (Von Arnim: Hierocles p.53.3ff), where it is said that every creature lives 'following his own "natural constitution" (*kataskeuê*)'

[27] cf. Hierocles *ibid.* 53.8-12, where we learn that Nature gives us especially the reason which enables us to see Nature itself, by which we can make choices in accordance with it and thus work out our lives 'dutifully' (*kathêkontôs)*'.

[28] cf. Watson *The Stoic Theory of Knowledge*, p.23.

[29] cf Pembroke *op.cit.* p.117:

> '*Logos* is, or can be, essentially continuous with impulse; it is not brought in from outside the biological realm, but at a certain level of organization arises spontaneously within it, and the form taken by impulse below this level is not so much irrational as prior to the rational.'

[30] That which is according to Nature (Cic *Fin.* 3.20) is described as '*aestimabile*' (*kat'axian*).

call *ennoia*, and sees the order, and as I might say, harmony, by which all these things have to be done, he values it far more than those things which he first desired, and thereby so concluded by cognition and reason, as to decide that in it was situated the highest good of man, to be pursued and sought for its own sake. Since this consists in what the Stoics call *homologia* — let us call it *convenientia* if you like — since, then, in this is found the good to which all virtuous actions and virtue itself, which is the only thing reckoned among goods, must be referred, then, though it arises subsequently, it must nevertheless be the only thing to be sought by reason of its own force and worth, whereas none of the things which are 'Firsts of Nature' is to be sought for its own sake.' (Cic. *Fin.* 3.21. cf. Pembroke *op.cit.* 117-8.)

N.P. White (*op.cit.* 155-7) plausibly suggests that the acts which we perform in pursuit of *homologia* are in fact the same acts which we once performed simply to preserve ourselves *in naturae statu*. The change which has taken place is in motivation: the rational soul is able to discern the providential order which nature imposes on its life, and thus imitate it in its responsible action, not because of the value of the actions, but because of the value of the natural order[31].

4.1.5 Hierocles' account emphasises yet further the importance of self-perception as the key to the development of *oikeiôsis*[32]: the ability of the animal to perceive its limbs which Cicero (drawing presumably from Chrysippus) alludes to in his description of the preference of whole limbs fitted to the purpose[33]. Hierocles claims that

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[31] White p.157 who cites Cicero *ND.* 2.35 & 38-9; Plutarch *St. Rep.* 1054ef.

[32] cf. A.A. Long 'Representation and the Self in Stoicism' in Everson (ed.) *Psychology* (Camb. 1991) p.106. points out that Hierocles regards it as 'a precondition of the animal's perceiving anything else'. B. Inwood. 'Hierocles, theory and argument in the 2nd. century AD.' (*O.S.A.P.* 1984) suggests (p.155) that this emphasis is 'disproportionate'.

[33] cf. *E.S.* 4.44ff where Hierocles emphasizes the importance of the idea that the soul extends to all parts of the body:

'For extending outside, the soul encounters all parts of the body with relaxation, since it is mixed in with it, and having encountered it,

animals immediately perceive the fittedness of their limbs for certain purposes, as humans the use of their perceptive organs[34]. Further, Hierocles emphasises that an animal's self-perception is *continuous* (4.40ff)[35] and, moreover, extends to the perception of itself *in relation to* other animals (2.20ff; 3.19), in which lies the basis of its understanding of its position in the world. There could be no experience of the external world, says Hierocles, unless there were experience of the self[36]. In other words, experience of the outside world is meaningless unless one understands a conscious self as the thing which experiences[37]. Furthermore, the experience of the

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it is encountered with in return.'
At 32-3, which is badly mutilated, there may be an reference, which von Arnim includes in he reconstruction to the 'tensional movement' (*tonikê kinêsis*) of soul-*pneuma* between the *hêgemonikon* and the other parts of the soul which would be a plausible explanation in systematic terms, and which, as we have seen, seems to lie behind the Early Stoic account of self-perception, cf. [Aëtius] IV 8,7; Pembroke *op.cit.* 119. The outcome, according to Hierocles is that an *antilêpsis* occurs between all parts of the body and the soul (*ibid.* 52-3) and that this is equivalent to the animal perceiving itself.

[34] Col. 1.51ff. This latter point is the more important when we consider the doctrine of parts and faculties of the soul considered above: the perceptive faculties and soul parts being one and the same. Thus Hierocles emphasises that the key to the soul's perception of the body is the *hêgemonikon's* perception of (and connection to) the other soul-parts.

[35] Col. 4,40ff.

[36] *ibid.* 6.1ff. According to Hierocles an animal cannot experience 'white' without perceiving itself 'being whitened', or 'being heated' or 'being sweetened'. cf. Seneca *Ep.*121.12; Pembroke *op.cit.* 118. Hierocles tells us that there is not experience of external things without experience of the self. The experience of the self *that it exists* is the first experience: from then on what we experience is *ourselves experiencing* (6,1ff). Seneca tells us, therefore, that the constitution must be perceived as being 'that through which they perceive other things'. Unless we perceive ourselves as having a hand — and its being part of us — then we cannot perceive that hand as being burned in fire, for example. As Pembroke points out, this counters a sceptical argument. The Cyrenaics had argued that we could have certainty about sensations (eg. whiteness), but not about the corresponding objects (*M.* 7.191). Whereas Hierocles takes objects for granted, he nonetheless claims it is possible to notice something without consciousness, at every stage, of the self as a locus (6.3ff).

[37] Hierocles tells us that the theoretical basis of this is that a *hêgemonikê dynamis* begins from itself. This is exactly parallel to Epictetus' insistence that the *dynamis* which governs all other things must essentially be 'self-contemplating' (1.1.4).

self is the first stage in the experience of the external world which is somehow analogous to it. The logical link, according to Hierocles (*E.S.* 7), between self-perception and self-appropriation, is the argument that the animal, in perceiving itself is *pleased* with itself and its perception. So what is significant — for our purposes — about Hierocles' account is that, for him, self-perception is prior to self-appropriation, both logically and temporally.

The self which is perceived in Hierocles' account is unquestionably a soul-body complex, a *syntheton* (*E.S.* 4.38), yet, that notwithstanding, the act of self-perception is an act of the soul perceiving the body. The body and the soul, although, in accordance with the orthodox Stoic position entirely mixed together, are nonetheless 'resistant to one another's touch' (4.44). In other words, though mixed, they are discrete, and, since mental functions are of the soul, it is the soul which perceives that a particular body belongs to it. One consequence of this idea is reflected in a famous passage in the Hierocles material quoted by Stobaeus (4.617 H). Hierocles depicts the society in which we live as a series of concentric circles centring on ourselves. In each of these concentric circles we place a category of other people, depending on the closeness of our relation to them. The 'moral of the story' as it were, is that we should 'draw in' the circles, regarding those who inhabit the further circles as if they were nearer. We shall return to this in due course when we come to look at the 'external' aspects of the self and our duties towards others, but the aspect of this account which concerns us particularly at the moment is the way in which Hierocles refers to the centre of the circle and its immediate surroundings. Hierocles tells us that the centre-point of the circle is the mind (*dianoia*), and that the first circle, which contains the body and its parts, 'nearly touches it'. This expression is quite striking. While the body bears the most intimate relation to the mind at the centre of the circle, it is nonetheless distinct from that centre, and, as it were, stands in a similar relation, albeit closer, to the mind as that enjoyed by the various categories of other people. While Hierocles himself defines the self as composite, he opens the door to the possibility that one might restrict the self to the soul and its activities, as we find in Epictetus.

A similar puzzle is found in the account of the self found in Seneca *Epistle* 121. Seneca focuses upon the *systasis* or 'constitution'. One feature of this constitution

is that it is subject to change: there is a different constitution for each age or period in our lives (§ 15; Seneca is referring here to human life). Constitution is defined as a relative disposition of the *hêgemonikon* to the body. In other words, the relationship between mind and body is open to change, as changes take place in the mind and body. As we develop, a rational mind develops in the *hêgemonikon*, and at the same time, the body, as it grows has different capacities and needs. As a consequence the relation between the two inevitably changes: the infant simply cries when he is hungry, his hunger pangs determined by the needs of growth and exertion, whereas the adult can select the appropriate time and place to eat and also the appropriate quantity and quality of food; he thereby has a moral duty not to be gluttonous or unduly ascetic in his habits. In one sense, this is the same basic pursuit: the preservation of the body's health, but in another sense, the situation has changed considerably in respect of the body's needs, but more especially in the increasingly greater importance which the *hêgemonikon* has in the relation between the two. In making this point, Seneca is conceding that *oikeiôsis* appropriates a man to himself *qua* a rational human being and not an animal (§ 14) when he comes to be rational; at the initial stages, when we are in infancy and do not understand our constitution, but are merely aware of it[38]. The child who does not possess reason *yet* cannot be appropriated to a rational constitution (§ 14), but, by implication, in due course he may.

Given that the constitution is subject to change, and indeed, as Seneca asserts, there is a *different* constitution for every age, we might ask whether the later Stoics actually considered the constitution as the self, but rather as something related to the self, but behind which the 'true' self lurked as a continuous entity; a true self represented by the *hêgemonikon* and its activities, as we saw to be the case in Epictetus. While there is no explicit identification of the self with the mind in the later Stoics, other than in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius[39], a shift is taking place in the

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[38] Sic infantibus quoque animalibus principalis partis suae sensus est non satis dilucidus nec expressus. (§ 13)

[39] So 12.3.1ff where we are constituted of three things, *sômation, pneumation* and *noûs*. Of these only *noûs* is 'ours'. Marcus goes on: 'If you separate yourself from *yourself*, that is to say, from your mind (*dianoia*)...'

way in which the self is circumscribed by *oikeiôsis*. Emphasis seems to be moving away from the developmental self (which is shaped by *oikeiôsis*) towards the mature self in which the mind shapes itself as a self, so that the mind is the unique centre of the human good.

4.1.6 We thus find two accounts of the self in the early Stoa and in Epictetus. Both of these have certain common features: they are dependent on self-awareness: the early Stoic account depends on perceiving one's constitution, Epictetus' upon the self-contemplation of the reasoning faculty of the soul in the *hêgemonikon*. Likewise both assume that this self-awareness is aimed at promoting the interest of the self. The early Stoics believed that knowledge of the self as a combination of body and soul would lead to the choosing of things advantageous to that constitution and rejecting of things which were disadvantageous to it. Likewise, Epictetus proposes that we use the power of the rational faculty to contemplate itself in order to improve the state of that faculty by the use of impressions and the substitution of sound for faulty judgements.

However, there appears to be a significant difference in the boundaries of the self itself. The early Stoics at least as far as can be discerned do not seem to make any fundamental distinction between the way in which *oikeiôsis* operates in rational and irrational animals in circumscribing the self. It is not explicitly the case that the self of the mature man with full rationality lies anywhere other than in the complex of body and soul, although it is clearly the case, as Seneca, argued that this constitution changes in respect of the changing relation between the two component parts. Epictetus' view of the self, on the other hand, is unique to rational man; it is centred on the feature which rational man has which other animals lack. A man *is* what makes him a man as opposed to an animal. Indeed, he is failing his human nature if he allows his sense of self to lie in any other feature of his nature.

Clearly, according to the Stoic view of human development, this makes Epictetus' account of the self the self of a mature human being. The question then

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Elsewhere, Marcus tells us that *aidôs* towards one's own *dianoia* is honour to oneself (6.16.5); one's *hêgemonikon* is *idion* (3.4.2) and *eph' hêmin* (7.16.1 & 9.7.1)

arises as to whether there is a real change of anthropological doctrine, or simply a change of emphasis. Might it be the case that Epictetus is simply supplying a gap in the Stoic theory? We shall need to look in detail both at Epictetus' view of *oikeiôsis* and also at the evidence for the earlier Stoics on the question of the changing constitution and the changes from irrationality to rationality and from the pursuit of advantage to the proper understanding of the good which leads to wisdom.

4.2.1 Epictetus' account thus seems to differ in a number of crucial respects from the conclusion which the earlier Stoics had reached on the question of the seat of the individual self. They reasoned from the principle of 'appropriation' that the self resided in a complex of soul and body which was the object of our self-perception and appropriation. This notwithstanding, we should be precipitate to assume that Epictetus abandoned *oikeiôsis* as a basis for theorizing on human psychology and ethics. Epictetus, like the earlier Stoics, regards *oikeiôsis* as the basis of self-interest. Man is so constituted, he tells us, that he can gain none of the goods proper to him as an individual (*idiôn agathôn*) unless he acts towards the common advantage (*koinon ôphelimon*, 1.19.13)[40]. That he should fail to pursue what appears to him to be his good or advantage (whether it be so or not) is absurd:

> 'Since what do you expect? That someone should neglect both himself and his own advantage (*idiou sympherontos*)? How then could there be a single and identical principle (*archê*) for everyone: appropriation towards their own?' (*ibid.* 15).

The question of the relation of self-interest to the common weal will occupy us in due course, but we can note that Epictetus regards us as so constituted that we are appropriated towards that which belongs to us, or at least what we believe to belong to us (Epictetus frequently asserts that the mature soul, at least, is more often than not in error with respect to those things which fall into this domain). However, what Epictetus is doing at this point is making a generic point about the nature of our intentions. We have a principle, an *archê*, which makes us take care for our own interests, and regard their promotion as the principal task in life. In which respect Epictetus differs not at all from the classic mechanism of *oikeiôsis*.

However, our attempts to account for appropriation in Epictetus must take into account the significant difference between Epictetus' and the early Stoic doctrines of the self: the narrowing of the field of things which are said to belong to us. What was truly 'ours' excluded things, such as our body and our immediate family, to which we

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[40] Hierocles (*ap. Stob.* p.50.14 Von Arnim) distinguishes between what is advantageous (*sympheron*) 'in common' (*koinêi*) and 'privately' (*idiai*). In order to have a proper view of our place in the community and to act accordingly, we must regard them as the same.

were appropriated in the classic Stoic understanding of *oikeiôsis*. In the introductory section of the chapter we considered 2.22, a chapter in which Epictetus sets out his doctrine of 'inclination', towards some feature of life, whether it be mind, body or property (§§ 19-21), which determines our 'sense of self' and orientation in life. This part of the discussion is introduced by placing it in the context of the doctrine of *oikeiôsis*:

> 'It is a general principle — do not be deceived — that every animal is appropriated to nothing so much as its own advantage (*idiôi sympheronti*). Whatever may appear to it to hinder it towards this end, whether it be brother or father or child or beloved or lover, he will hate, condemn and curse it.' (§ 15).

Two lessons are apparent from this passage and its aftermath. In the first place, like the earlier Stoics, Epictetus accepts that an 'external' view of appropriation was a means of endearing oneself to one's family, fellow-citizens and possessions — making their interest equivalent to one's own[41]. However, he observes that, where the interest of others obstructs the pursuit of self-interest, it is self-interest which is preserved[42]. While, as we have seen, we are not to disregard those people who are connected to us by appropriation, Epictetus' watchword is that 'the good is to be preferred to every *oikeiotês*' (3.3.5). Other people can have *nothing to do* with one's true interest, which is the good, and it is an error to believe that they have any bearing on the internal state of the self. To regard my brother as a good is as inimical to the better state of my self as to regard my house or my reputation as a good: while my brother's relation demands certain *kathêkonta* of me which my house does not, it remains the case that he is no more part of my self, nor an object of self-interest (or self-projection) than it is.

Secondly, the self to which one is appropriated is Epictetus' self: the mind,

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[41] So, for example, people are appropriated to one another *by nature* (3.24.11, cf. 2.22.7).

[42] 'Who is more well disposed (*eunousteron*) and endeared (*oikeioteron*) than you to yourself.' *Eunoia* is closely linked with *oikeiotês* in defining the disposition which we have towards those to whom Nature links us by appropriation cf. Hierocles p. 56.17 Von Arnim.

expressed as *prohairesis*. This becomes apparent in the sections of this chapter which we discussed in 4.1.1, where the pupil is reminded that there are various locations for the sense of self, but only one for the true self. We are required to choose our place of orientation, whether it be mind, body or externals. Self-love, properly directed, is expressed by choosing to maintain the *prohairesis* in the right state, rather than take an undue interest in some external thing (3.4.9-10). While we will be appropriated, by dint of our *archê*, towards that which we *believe* to be the location of the self, that appropriation (at least in the mature human being) will be misdirected if we do not have the right belief, and the corresponding right orientation, towards the mind as the true self. Appropriation does not in itself guarantee that right orientation (any more than it did for the earlier Stoics).

This idea in Epictetus corresponds to that stage in human development in the classical account where, as we assume reason, we learn to perform *kathêkonta* for morally right reasons, by perceiving the *homologia* present in the *kathêkonta* which we have previously performed by instinct or under instruction. However, while, for the earlier Stoics, there are differing moral acts to be chosen, depending upon whether we decide to eat moderately or be a glutton, or even whether we decide to value the soul more than the body, there is no emphasis on orientation or location of the self. It is not presumed that a sense of self is to be selected, and that there might be a wrong choice with consequences as to the future guidance which we receive from appropriation. *Oikeiôsis* does underlie an ethical approach to human life, but this cannot be achieved in Epictetus' version of the doctrine by the projection of our selfhood onto persons and things external to us, as we find it in Hierocles and in the accounts of the earlier Stoics: Epictetus' self does not stretch this far.

Our ethical life requires something further: an understanding of and reflection upon the rational aspect of specifically *human* nature and the orientation of our lives towards the advantage of that true self. This achieved, right moral action in the face of our fellow-man will flow naturally from the proper disposition thereby achieved (§ 20)[43]. So we must strive to perfect the 'faculty which uses impressions', while,

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[43] We can be 'appropriatively disposed' towards other persons (2.22.7).

at the same time giving what is due to them (*ta oikeia*) to our relations (4.10.13)[44]. It is in this context that Epictetus' comment that we shall not achieve our own particular goods unless we pursue the common advantage must be viewed. Epictetus' contention is that we shall achieve both at once, by the same thoughts and actions: in the pursuit of our own good by the proper orientation of the self we shall achieve the good of others as far as Providence allows (2.22.20). This in turn can be subsumed under the pursuit of the good of nature itself: the submission of the self to the 'whole' by submitting to the will of God expressed in nature and Providence (4.1.99; 4.4.39). This done, we shall both be in a good state ourselves, and be the instruments of providence in securing the advantage of others.

If *oikeiôsis*, therefore, is enough for an animal to conduct itself properly (1.9.9), it is insufficient for rational man. That rationality itself requires that the identification and development of the self go beyond appropriation *per se*, but seek to have a mind which is properly oriented which will then lead the soul to be appropriated towards itself being completely in accordance with nature.

4.2.2 We saw, then, that Epictetus accepts *oikeiôsis* as an account of how animals — and developing human beings — seek their own advantage (*sympheron*). However, the mature human being is designed to seek his own *good*[45]. Provided that we are properly oriented, it would seem that *oikeiôsis* will assist us in pursuing this good. In the classical account of *oikeiôsis*, good, being a species of advantage, is assumed into the account of development. Advantage is a model for us of how the true good is pursued. Under appropriation, we pursue those things which have value (*axia*, Cic. *Fin.* 3.20). As our development towards rationality continues, we can see that there is a 'harmony' (*homologia*) in nature which determines those things which have value. Once we have observed the *homologia* of nature, we can see that, while we continue to pursue certain things in life as advantageous to us, we no longer pursue them for their own sake, but rather we pursue them because the pursuit is in harmony with

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[44] Who are themselves described as *oikeioi* (*Ench.* 29.6)

[45] The human soul never refuses the impression of the obvious (*enargê*) good: it is upon this that every *kinêsis* of man and God depends (3.3.4)

nature. We pursue the harmony itself as a *summum bonum* (*ibid.* 22) as it reflects and promotes the 'harmony with nature' of our own mental disposition (DL 7.88).

Epictetus' view that the only true human good is the good state of the soul is, of course, entirely consistent with the early Stoic position: the 'harmony with nature' which is the *summum bonum* of the earlier Stoics in this account is a state of the soul equivalent to the 'right state of the *prohairesis*' which Epictetus regards as the only good for man. However it is clear that he downgrades the emphasis on material advantage in his account of the activity of the mature human soul. Rather than seeking advantage in a way which promotes one's good, one seeks one's good, without any necessary expectation that one will receive that which is advantageous. Seeking the good, for Epictetus, is the pursuit of the good state of the soul, through the proper use of impressions and the making of judgements. The rightness of our actions will flow from this good state, as we use impressions properly — our judgements are the causes of our actions (3.9.2; 4.4.44) — but this is not to be regarded as the real end of human activity, which is the making of proper judgements in order to improve the state of our minds[46].

More especially, for Epictetus, seeking the good requires that we attend to those things which are distinctively ours (*idia*) and deal with those things which are 'alien' (*allotria*) as indifferent things which are of no real concern to us. This distinction is one which Epictetus makes on a number of occasions, and is correlative to the other important distinctions between those things which are within and outwith the domain of *prohairesis*[47], and those things which are within and outwith our power[48]. To become educated, Epictetus tells us, consists in learning which things

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[46] As Dobbin remarks (*op. cit.*p.87):

> 'In this context, perhaps, "judgements" is not the best translation for *dogmata*. It really targets the mental orientation of the agent in the performance of his (otherwise ambiguous) actions.'

[47] eg. 4.4.39, where nothing *aprohaireton* is *idion*, whereas at 4.12.15 *ta prohairetika* are directly opposed to *ta allotria*.

[48] cf. 3.24.23-4, where we find that the grief of another person is *allotrion*, and therefore outwith my power, whereas my own grief is *emon*, and within my power, since it is a passionate and erroneous state of my own *hêgemonikon*. It is only one's 'own' to which one can give one's full commitment, and deal with it *ex hapantos*,

are *idia*, and which *allotria* (4.5.7). *Idia*, we discover, are those things which are within our power, according to Epictetus restricted definition of this term: those things to which we can *infallibly* bring about changes. This is, as we observed in a previous chapter, in essence the internal state of the mind itself, and the judgments and intentions which are present within it[49]. *Allotria* are defined as those things which are 'external' to us (4.12.15), leaving *idia*, by inference to be those things which belong intimately to us as selves.

What makes this particularly interesting is the fact that the testimony of the early Stoa opposes *allotrion*, not to *idion*, but rather to *oikeion*. The animal seeks that which is *oikeion*, its own advantage, and rejects that which is *allotrion*, which is destructive to it. While Epictetus accepts that there is an *idion sympheron*, he nonetheless regards *oikeiôsis* as the determining factor in our general advantage. However, it is *to idion*, which for him, determines the limits of the true self in the mature, rational adult. While, we must assume that he would oppose *oikeion* to *allotrion* in respect of the pre-rational stages of our development[50], it seems clear that, when he opposes *idion* and *allotrion* in respect of the adult self, he is including much of what is *oikeion* — all indeed that is not included in the subset which is *idion* — in what is to be defined as 'alien'[51]. This includes the body, as well as external things which might otherwise be valued by us as being outwith our power (4.1.66,

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otherwise one is fighting God. Likewise to wish that one's son or wife should not be in error, is to wish that *allotria* were not *allotria* (4.5.7)

[49] cf. 4.4.44 where judgements are *idia.*, and 1.26.15, where Epictetus speaks of our *idion hêgemonikon*

[50] Irrational animals are said to be sufficient unto themselves and not to lack *oikeia*, which seems to conform to the classic doctrine. Providence, we are told, takes care of the purely material needs of animals (1.16.1ff).

[51] cf for example the list of things not within our power at 1.22.10: 'the body, the parts of the body, possessions, parents, brothers, children, native land, and to sum up, our associations (*koinônoi*). As Hierocles points out, *koinônoi* are *oikeioi* (p.53.20 Von Arnim).

87, 158)[52].

However, in extending the domain of what can be considered 'alien' to us, Epictetus also changes the relation which we bear to it. According to the early Stoic doctrine, that which was *allotrion* was rejected by the animal as harmful; according to Epictetus it is to be treated as a matter of indifference, something over which we have no absolute control, but which we may try to influence, provided that we do not do so with full commitment (*ex hapantos*; eg. 3.24.23-4). In other words, there is no reason why something which is 'alien' may not, nonetheless, be a 'preferred' indifferent (*proêgmenon*). Epictetus thus focuses his own account of what is important to us solely onto that area which, in the account of development which we find in Cicero and Diogenes Laërtius, is that which is concerned with rational adult life. When rationality comes to us, we continue to pursue, from the point of view of rational selection, the same priorities — and, no doubt, activities — which appropriation directed us towards in the pre-rational state, but with a new sense of direction. It is this sense of motivation alone, the pursuit of the good, which interests Epictetus. His emphasis, it would appear, is not in explaining human development, but on setting adult human lives in the right direction.

What we can truly call our*selves*, and our 'own', is thus restricted to the mind, since it is that alone which we can alter and determine for ourselves. The earlier Stoics defined the self by *oikeiôsis*, in an attempt to define the self by the observable fact that an animal perceives its own body to be part of itself, and thus concerns itself with providing for that which is within the scope of self-perception. Epictetus, by contrast, in defining the adult human self does not rely on self-perception, but on what he calls 'self-contemplation' (1.1.1 ff). This is the concept which we noted above which determines the superiority of the mind, the 'faculty which uses

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[52] Dobbin is thus wrong to insist that Epictetus was in line with those Stoics who saw the person as a complex of body and soul (*op. cit.* p.121). He is, however, right to say in the same place that the self is 'embodied'; as we shall see in due course, Epictetus does not reject the idea that we have relations conferring duties and responsibilities which are connected with our nature as a body.

impressions' over the other faculties of the soul, and of the body[53]. This faculty is distinguished by the fact that it can 'contemplate', and therefore 'govern' the other mental and psychic faculties, and in addition itself. (1.1.4) Since these faculties and functions operate by the mind using impressions, and since, in their developed state they 'consist' of systematically arranged impressions, which constitute a 'memory' (on the basis of which these impressions can be used in the future), then, Epictetus argues, it follows that they are subject to the 'faculty which uses impressions', considered *per se*.

So Epictetus works on the same principle as the earlier Stoics in suggesting that the self is that which can perceive itself as such and take care for itself as such, but he moves the boundaries of the self because of his firm belief that rational human nature is almost transcendentally different from that of animals (1.6.14). The mature human mind is capable, not simply of perceiving itself as a person, consisting of a soul operating in a body, but also as a mind. Since, Epictetus argues, this latter self-perception is the essential feature of mature human beings, it is therefore prior to the other self-perception. So we perceive ourselves as a mind, and a body which is attached to that mind (1.29.28; 2.1.17). This body is not within our absolute power to control or to provide for, and so it lacks the quality of being essentially part of the self. This is what underlies the peculiar point that the hand is 'part of us, but not *ours*' (4.1.78-9). The body is part of what we perceive ourselves to be as a human being, and so it is part of us. But to be 'ours', in Epictetus' understanding of the term, is to be *essentially* 'ours': to be entirely at our disposal. Only our selves are 'ours'.

4.2.3 The idea that my specifically human nature is the special object of my self-development, and that *oikeiôsis* in some way fails to provide fully for this (in the way

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[53] *Theôria* is a quality which belongs only to man: Nature, we are told, 'ended' human development with 'contemplation, understanding and a way of life in harmony with nature' (1.6.21). It is our fullest development, and one of the principal features which distinguishes us from animals, who have no need of understanding and distinguishing impressions (*ibid.* 18). Reason has been received from nature for the proper use of impressions (1.20.4-5).

which it seems to do for animals in general), is, as we can now see, connected with the emphasis which Epictetus places on not betraying that human nature by having the priorities which belong to animals (ie. the provision of food, sex and the like: 1.6.20; cf. 2.9.4): our body is that which we have in common with the irrational animals, our mind that which we have in common with God (1.3.3). If we concern ourselves solely with those things to which we are appropriated as animal 'constitutions', then we are acting as animals do. But Epictetus insists that, just as the human constitution is different from that of animals, so its end must be different (1.6.16)[54]. It is enough for animals to exercise their bodily functions, but human beings must act with understanding and morally (*ibid.* 14): understanding and living in an appropriate place within the universe in which God has placed us (1.6.18; 1.16.20 cf. 2.10.3). Our responsibility is to know ourselves as true human selves, and to concern ourselves with those selves[55], and to engage in the process of self-improvement or 'progress' (*prokopê*) which belongs to those selves. We must, as Epictetus has it, fulfil the 'promise' (*epangelia*) of a man (2.9.1ff).

Epictetus is thus promoting a view of our self which restricts it to that aspect of our nature which is unique to us as human beings, and the development of the self is equivalent to the development of this unique feature. Hence his insistence that the beginning of philosophy lies in introspection. We need to *discern* what the true self is. The alterations which we make to the self to develop it are in the form of judgements (*dogmata*), themselves 'uses of impressions'. Not only is the process of developing the self a rational one, but the self itself must needs be rational, consisting as it does of these judgements.

In this respect Epictetus appears to find himself at variance with the position which was held by the earlier Stoics. While they also believed that the development of reason in humans was an extra stage, or series of stages in appropriation, it is nonetheless a final stage *of* appropriation rather than something of which appropriation

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[54] cf. Hierocles p.53.2ff Von Arnim. Every animal, he tells us, lives according to its own *kataskeuê*, but not using reason and calculation in the process. Nature has given us reason in order that we may have an aim (*skopos*): choosing what is advantageous to nature.

[55] Thereby imitating the self-contemplation of Zeus (3.13.6-8)

is an underlying principle, but which itself does not guarantee the appropriate orientation of the self. Epictetus, by contrast, takes the view that what is necessary is self-consciousness, not simply that one is a self and what that self's needs are, but also of what that self is. Only by being fully aware of itself as the true self, can the true self act properly *qua* self.

This is illustrated by N.P. White in his comparison of the Stoic account of *oikeiôsis* found in the third book of Cicero's *De finibus* with the apparently Antiochean 'Academic' account found in Book 5 of the same work. White points out that the account in Book 3 lacks what might be called a 'self-realizationist' view of human good: that is, one that 'fixes upon certain features of a human being that are thought to constitute its somehow essential nature and urges that those features be developed' (*op. cit.* p.146). Pohlenz, he suggests, came to attribute such a 'self-realizationist' view to the Stoa by relying upon an uncritical assimilation of the Antiochean account of *oikeiôsis* in Book 5[56]. Hence, he suggests that the self-preservation inherent in appropriation must necessarily manifest itself in a life according to reason, when a human being comes to full maturity.

In fact, claims White, self-realization in this sense is absent from the purely Stoic account found in *De Finibus* 3. The good and end for man, when he comes to his full development, is to act in accordance with *homologia*. This involves acting according to both our own nature and that of the universe. But it seems to be a natural progression from the appropriate action which was characteristic of us when we were at an earlier stage in our development. Thus we do the same things as fully mature adults, and even as wise men, as we did before, but our motivation has changed: the rational man judges his actions to be in accordance with nature, rather than simply being directed by nature, and the wise man acts firmly and consistently from exactly

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[56] We must not discount, however, the view of Chrysippus (DL 7.94) that the human good is virtue because it is the natural fulfilment of a rational being *qua* rational being. However, in support of White's argument, it might be suggested that what is being suggested here is a 'global' view, the perspective of nature herself in giving man a particular aim. This is not necessarily the same as having oneself as a rational being as an object of self-realization. The Stoic wise man seeks to be in harmony with nature because of the value to him of *nature*, which is clear from the importance of *homologia*.

the right motives, and so his actions take on the particular quality of being 'right actions' (*katorthômata*). Virtue does not simply lie in an aggregation of performed right acts, but also in the disposition to perform, and more particularly to *intend* these actions. Importantly, it does not seem to require emphasis on knowledge of human nature as a generic concept.

Antiochus' version of appropriation comes to a view of the end which differs from that of the Stoics. He retains the Peripatetic view that there are goods pertaining to the body as well as the soul[57]. This being the case, he believes that the Stoic account makes an unjustifiable leap from pursuit of material advantage, which he characteristically thinks of as one of the goods for man, to a concept of the end suitable for rational man which takes account only of goods of the soul (*De Finibus*, 4.29). Secondly, he has reservations as to whether having moral virtue as a state of the soul as the only end and good is consistent with the natural instinct to seek things conducive to life, which must include these bodily 'goods' (4.28-9). In his view, we must conclude that the link between appropriation and a final end for man lies in our studying and being aware of our specific nature as human beings, and adopting as an end the attainment of as many as possible of the most important things according to nature, including material 'goods' (4.25-6). While the mind is superior, it is not the whole of our selves. So, the conclusion of his account of appropriation related in Book 5 insists that the end of each animal is necessarily different: since human beings have reason, their end is to live 'secundum naturam', but this is understood to be 'to live according to the nature of man, perfected in every way and requiring nothing' (5.26)

White points out that the evidence suggests that the middle and later Stoa moved towards this 'self-realizationist' view of the self. Panaetius is commended by an Antiochean spokesman for withdrawing from the Stoic insistence that the end lies only in virtue, without any consideration for 'external goods' (*De Finibus*. 4.79). Similarly, he is associated with the idea that in determining our *kathêkonta*, we have to take into account the fact that we excel the lower animals (*De Officiis* 1.105), and

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[57] cf. Inwood 'Hierocles: Theory and Argument in the 2nd century A.D.' *OSAP* 1984, p.194

in fact that human morality derives from the rational nature *by which* we excel them (*ibid.* 107).

The later Stoics, by contrast, characteristically return to the earlier Stoic view that the good of man lies only in the perfect state of the soul. Where they do advocate 'self-realization', it does not take the form which Antiochus commends. Seneca explicitly tells us that it is not necessary to *understand* one's constitution in order to be aware of it and how to develop it. He claims that the constitution of man is a relative disposition of the *hêgemonikon* towards the body ('principale animi quodam modo se habens erga corpus'; *Ep.*121.10). As body and soul develop in time the relation between them changes. So, Seneca tells us, there is no need to be concerned that a young child has not sufficient reason to be appropriated to a reasoning constitution.

Seneca does not deny, however, the contention of the interlocutor that a man is 'dear to himself in respect of that part by reason of which he is a man' (*ibid.* 14). It is this view which would be the basis of a claim that Seneca has a 'self-realizing' view of the self. In every age of man, one is appropriated towards the constitution which one has at that point; although a child has a constitution which will develop into rational man, nonetheless *oikeiôsis* appropriates him towards a child's constitution and a child's needs, which, being basically those of an irrational animal, will be those of a soul-body relation which emphasises bodily needs. When we reach rational maturity, we have a constitution, a relation between the *hêgemonikon* and the body, which gives priority to the *hêgemonikon* in the relation. That we do not fully understand our own soul (*ibid.* 12) does not preclude that we are to be concerned with its development as the first priority of our life.

For Seneca, therefore, as for the earlier Stoics, the *telos* of the human self evolves along with the self and its constitution through appropriation. *Oikeiôsis* is sufficient to bring about the realization of the adult self. What it cannot do, of course, as it can in earlier stages of development, is bring about the *telos* itself, since the realized adult self is responsible for achieving its own *telos*. However, it remains the case that the rational, adult self is on a continuum of development from the initial self and that its progress along that continuum is governed by appropriation.

Epictetus, as we have seen, is unquestionably committed to a view of the

human self which emphasizes the distinction between the human and animal nature (1.6.14; 2.10.3), and different ends which different constitutions have. Every creature is *kalon* when it achieves the best possible state according to its own nature (3.1.3), and the *kalon* and *aretê* of man lies in moral virtues (*ibid.* 8)[58]. In addition to his notion of the 'betrayal' of human nature by improper priorities, he also emphasizes strongly, as we have seen, a notion of self-development which requires us to understand in detail the rational nature of man[59] and develop it as such, and not as part of a whole involving the body. It is our duty to reflect upon ourselves as rational beings and develop that part of us which not only distinguishes us from animals, but also makes us one with the mind of God, when we are properly disposed[60].

Epictetus' self is a mature self. It has a self-consciousness which belongs to the mature, rational human soul. In this respect it differs from the self of the earlier Stoics, which, though it altered in the relation of soul to body, remained the same in nature throughout our lives. The mature man in Epictetus account assumes a self which is identical to his mind. It also differs, therefore from that of Antiochus, and, as it would appear, Panaetius, in that, although there is an ethical duty to realize the self, by reflecting upon and acting in the interest of the distinctively human self, he does not allow the body to be part of this self or its priorities.

While Epictetus accepts the rôle of appropriation in human development, and indeed as an underlying feature of animals which explains self-interest, he does not allow it to define the self of the mature rational human being. Appropriation can provide for the needs of animals and children, which are largely physical (1.16.1ff), but it cannot, in itself, provide for the needs of the adult human self, which must be realized by attention to the state of the *hêgemonikon* and *prohairesis* and the appropriate use of impressions to pursue this aim. We must choose either to attend to the *hêgemonikon* or externals, and Epictetus makes it clear that true self interest

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[58] cf. 3.1.40ff, where we must make the *prohairesis kalê* by eradicating bad judgements and replacing them with good ones.

[59] So the *epangelia* of man must be fulfilled, and man is a rational, mortal animal (2.9.1-2).

[60] The 'subject-matter' (*hylê*) of the good man (*kalos kai agathos*) is his own *hêgemonikon* (3.3.1), and his *ergon* to use impressions according to nature.

requires the former (*Ench.* 29.7).

4.3.1 So we find that Epictetus gives us an account of what might be called the 'internal self' which differs in some respects from that which is supplied for the earlier Stoics by the doctrine of appropriation. However, as Kerferd points out, appropriation has both an inward-looking and outward-looking aspect (*op.cit.* 179), and thus there is, in a sense, both an internal and external self. According to the Stoics, just as we are appropriated towards things which are to our advantage, so we are appropriated towards other people, and their interests[61]. Nature so determines it that we shall have concern for our children (Cicero *Fin.* 3.62)[62]. This establishes an instinctive principle in our conduct which underlies our relations with other people and our natural tendency to form marital and civic relations (*ibid.* 63;[63]). The next step, Cicero tells us, is that we should prefer common to private advantage, which derives from the principle that the universe itself is a kind of city-state, consisting of gods and men (*ibid.* 64).

This account is supported by that of Hierocles, which seems to be entirely in sympathy with that of the earlier Stoics in this respect. Our *genos* is wholly aimed at *koinônia*, says Hierocles (p.52.17 Von Arnim), which clearly corresponds to the Ciceronian 'apti ad coetus, concilia, civitates'[64]. Moreover, as had been contended in the Ciceronian account, we are to value the *sympheron* of the city higher than that

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[61] Hierocles tells us that just as the awareness (*antilêpsis*) of externals requires perceptions of oneself (*E.S.* 6.1ff), the perception of another naturally exists alongside the animal's perception of the self (*ibid.* 6). Since perception underlies appropriation, then appropriation towards the interests of other people is possible.

[62] Plutarch notoriously complains of this (*St. Rep.* 1038b, cf. *Soll. An.* 962a, *De Amore Prolis* 495b; Pembroke '*Oikeiôsis...*' p.123), though the ground of his complaint does not seem to be that there is no logical grounds for connecting love of the child to self-appropriation (as opposed to love for the parent) but rather that it conflicts with the 'paradox' that everything is *oikeion* to the wise man and nothing to the foolish man.

[63] So Plutarch reports (*ibid.*) that our love of children is the basis of *koinônia* and justice. Hierocles tells us that it is a source of joy to us to see our children because of *eunoia* and *oikeiotês* (p.56.16-19).

[64] So marriage, as Hierocles observes in the same place, is a *kathêkon* because it is the most fundamental *koinônia* of all.

of ourselves (p.51.4ff)[65], since that which is *sympheron* to the wider community is by definition advantageous to the individual 'kata meros'. The key, as we have observed, is that Nature has so arranged things that we can project our selves onto people and things for which we ought to have concern. Hierocles tells us that in order to understand how we should conduct ourselves with respect to some other person, even a slave, we ought to imagine ourselves in the place of that person, so as to be aware of the needs which they have which can be met by ourselves.

The mechanism of *oikeiôsis*, it would seem, extends outwith one's own body[66]. There is a tension of *pneuma* which, by extending to the limits of the body and returning forms the basis of the self-perception which underlies self-appropriation[67]. But this tension extends outwith the body to perceive things outside — indeed, just as we cannot perceive external things without this self-perception, likewise we are told that the perception of another 'naturally exists alongside that on the self.'[68]. So the appropriation can be so extended as well: we are appropriated not only towards those things which this tensional movement shows to us as our own body, but also towards persons which we perceive as being connected to us in some way.

This aspect of the doctrine was not intended to detract from the primary function of appropriation, which was to explain our endearment to ourselves. The

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[65] cf. Hierocles p.56.27 where we learn that the *polis* is a *systêma*. Epictetus' insistence that the universe is a *systêma* of gods and men corresponds to the view expressed by Cicero above.

[66] In a fragmentary passage in the *Êthikê Stoicheiôsis* (col.9) Hierocles seems to suggest that, in fact, there are three dispositions which can be called *oikeiosis*: the first, *eunoêtikê*, is relative to oneself. The second, *sterktikê* is the one which concerns family relations, and the third *hairetikê* is relative to external things (cf. Inwood 'Hierocles, Theory and Argument' p.180; Pembroke, *op.cit.* p.126). The temptation to associate the last of the three with the *prohairesis* must be resisted. As we have considered at length in previous chapters, *prohairesis* in Epictetus is largely a self-regarding function of the soul, which does not seem to be properly oriented — in the first place at least — towards things external to the self. In many respects it more closely resembles Hierocles' first *oikeiosis*.

[67] Hierocles *E.S.* 6.44-52; cf. Pembroke *op. cit.* p. 119

[68] Hierocles *E.S.* 6.1ff; Seneca *Ep.* 121.12; cf. Pembroke *op. cit.* p.118

Stoics were anxious to explain observable psychological phenomena, including not only our pursuit of self-interest, but the fact that some persons are dearer to us than others, and that this, more often than not, is correlative to the closeness of the physical relation involved. The Anonymous Commentator on Plato's Theaetetus, in an illuminating passage, informs us that *oikeiôsis* ought to vary in tension, just as other dispositions were wont to do in the Stoic theory (5.22ff; 6.13). The Anonymous argues that this point would undermine the Stoic idea that justice is founded upon appropriation, but in fact, it helps us to explain the well-known passage of Hierocles, to which we have already referred, which gives us details of how we stand in respect of different relations (*scheseis*) (p.61.10ff). Hierocles tells us to think of our relations as standing to us as a series of concentric circles. In the centre is the mind (*dianoia*). Immediately surrounding this — almost, but not quite touching — is a circle encompassing our body. The next circle contains our nearer relations[69], the third our more distant relations[70], the fourth, all other relatives. There are further circles encompassing various categories of fellow-citizens[71] and, last of all, the other inhabitants of the world. Hierocles tells us that the good man will seek to 'draw in' these circles: regarding the third one as the second and so on (61.23-6)[72]. In other words, we can, by means of a cognitive decision, increase the tension which stands in some particular (or general) relation. So, the more morally aware a man is, and the sounder the state of his soul, the stronger the tension of his *oikeiôsis*. Just as there is a difference between the tension of one's relation with one's brother as with that of one's uncle, so there is a difference in the tension of the good man's relation with his uncle from that of the bad man's. According to Hierocles the good man's relation to his uncle is of like tension to the bad man's to his brother, and so on.

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[69] Parents, siblings, wife and children (61.18)

[70] Uncles and aunts, grandparents and nephews and nieces

[71] ie. **5.** fellow-demesmen and tribesmen, **6.** fellow-citizens **7.** fellow city-dwellers (ie. including metics and slaves etc.) **8.** men of the same race.

[72] Elsewhere Hierocles tells us that our siblings should become, as it were, 'parts' to us, just as our limbs, for example are (p.60.7).

4.3.2 This elaborate system of the variations of appropriation does not, at least on the surface, appear in Epictetus[73]. However, as we have already noted, his account of the relations of the self to others does focus on the internal state of the soul as the key. Epictetus at times seems to suggest a completely solipsistic view of the self: that only one's own self is the object of our interest, and that persons external to ourselves are of no value to us. This is true in the sense that we are taught — entirely consistently with the Stoic tradition — that our good lies only in the right state of the *prohairesis* or *hêgemonikon*, and that only this should be pursued as a good and 'with full commitment' (*ex hapantos*, 4.12.15) as a thing within our power. However, it is not true to say that Epictetus regards all things external to the self as of equal and low value[74]. If he tells us to think of our child as it were a pot, then he does so for a specific purpose, to show us that things external to us will not help us to achieve the good, and that, on occasions we must give up some external thing or, as in this case, take a hyperbolically low view of its value, in order to prevent it from becoming an alternative 'good' to us:

> 'If we place it (the good) in a right *prohairesis*, it becomes a good itself to maintain relations; and furthermore, he who withdraws from some of the externals achieves a good.'[75]

So this active rejection of external things is, as it were, a kind of spiritual exercise. It is designed to act as a counter to the tendency of the human mind to place a high value on external things, a tendency which would, as Epictetus sees it, endanger the development of the soul towards its proper state. One of the tasks which we are given

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[73] However, at *Ench.* 30 he tells us that our duties (*kathêkonta* are measured (*parametreitai*) by our relations.

[74] Family relations are *kata physin* and *kalon* (1.11.17)

[75] 3.3.8. This statement comes from a passage which is discussed at length by J.J. Thierry; 'Epictetus on Σχεσεις', *Mnemosyne* XII (1944), pp.61-70. in which he argues that the attribution of the characters in the dialogue must be altered, since if Epictetus claims that the maintenance of relations is a good, then he cannot equally have said that one's father and brothers are *not* goods. However, as we can see here, there is a clear difference between the maintenance of the relation, which is the maintenance of one's own disposition relative to one's father or brother, where the end is the maintenance of one's disposition, and treating the father and brother as ends or goods in themselves.

as part of the process of developing the soul is the contemplation, along with the study of the divine governance, of the relations which we have with other things (2.13.8). The aim is to develop the self-sufficiency which God has; our human task is seeing ourself in the context of the providentially-governed world in which we live and preparing ourselves to meet eventualities which are not entirely within our power.

Epictetus does not give up *oikeiôsis* as a means of defining our relations, but he does not wish to use it as a means of defining our selves — selves delineated as the place of good rather than the mere advantage which is the defining source of the self of appropriation — and this is the point which he repeatedly makes with this kind of language. Rather, Epictetus focuses on the state of the self itself:

> 'Duties are, on the whole, measured by our relations[76]. "He is a father". One is constrained to take care of him, to give way to him in all things, to bear his scoldings and strikings. "But he is a bad father". But surely you were not appropriated by nature to a good father, but to a father? "My brother does me wrong." Maintain, therefore the relation[77] which you have towards him; don't look at what he does but at what is for you to do if your *prohairesis* is to be disposed in accordance with nature. No-one will harm you unless you wish it. You will be harmed whenever you conclude that you are being harmed. Thus you will discover the duty of your neighbour, your fellow-citizen, the general, if you accustom yourself to look at the relations.' (*Ench.* 30)

If, he tells us, we place the good in the *prohairesis*, then we shall conduct ourselves rightly toward our relations: we shall be the sort of son and father that we ought to be (2.22.19f)[78]. In other words, the focus is getting the self in the right state

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[76] Simplicius, commenting on this passage (*In Epict. Ench.* 83,22ff.) tells us that we are not duty-bound to treat everyone alike, but rather 'in different ways to different people according to the difference in the relations'

[77] the term here is *taxis* which is stronger than *schesis* insofar as it seems to suggest that the relation is one which has been ordained by Providence.

[78] One aspect of conducting these relations properly is remembering that our father and brother are not goods in themselves (3.3.5).

and the actions which emerge from it will be the appropriate dutiful actions[79]; the actions which are right will be the same actions and derive from the same judgements as those which promote our individual good, but it is the good of the self which is to be the motivation for these actions[80]. It is this which Epictetus is asserting when he claims that, when we orient our pursuit of the good towards the *prohairesis*, then the proper conduct of our relations becomes a good (3.3.8).

4.3.3 One striking feature of later Stoic teaching on the external aspects of the self is the development of the concept of a 'rôle' (*prosôpon*; Latin: *persona*), which is found principally in Panaetius (*apud Ciceronem*), Hierocles and Epictetus. As we shall see in due course, each of these philosophers presents a different perspective on the *prosôpon* and the position which it has in the Stoic system, which shows it to be a relatively fluid concept in this period. Epictetus' view, as we shall see, is a distinctive account of the operation of the self in the world around it.

The notion that the moral individual plays a rôle, like an actor on a stage, is not a new one in this period by any means. It seems to have some history in the Cynic tradition, as becomes apparent when we consider a number of passages in the fragments of Teles. Here the idea of a *prosôpon* is largely a matter of the individual's relation to Fortune: just as the good actor must play whatever rôle the poet assigns him, so the good man must play the rôle that *Tychê* assigns him (p.5 Hense). Teles says that, according to Bion, Fortune is like a poetess who sometimes assigns one the

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[79] 'From which it turns out for those who have systematised it (the work of the philosopher), in appetence not to be unhappy, in aversion not to fall into <the thing which one seeks to avert>; to pass life free from grief, fear and perturbation, self-sufficiently (*kath'hauton*), and with his acquaintances maintaining relations both natural and artificial, son, father, brother, citizen, husband, wife, neighbour, fellow-traveller, ruler and subject.' (2.14.8)

[80] An example of this kind of behaviour is found at 2.10.8. Epictetus tells us that we ought not to make any claim against our brother for external things which are not within our power. In these areas we should defer to him. The brother is thereby externally advantaged, by, for example receiving a greater share of the paternal estate, and we are brought closer to our good by having made the proper judgment that such things do not pertain to the self and are outwith our power.

rôle of *prôtologos*, sometimes *deuterologos*, sometimes that of a king, sometimes a vagabond. One should not wish for the rôle of *prôtologos*, when one is a *deuterologos*, or we shall do something which is unfitting (or discordant, *anarmoston*; pp.5-6 Hense)[81].

The rôle placed by Fortune (*tychê*) in this account is not dissimilar to the rôle played by Fate (*heimarmenê*), Nature or God in the Stoic account (eg. Epictetus *Fr.* 11.1; *Ench.* 17). Both Epictetus and Panaetius assume that at least some of our rôles are assigned to us either by Nature in the form of innate capacities or circumstances which are imposed upon us, such as the relations which we have with other people or social status[82]. Part of our pursuit of the good requires that we submit to these rôles and operate within them, accepting the limitations which they impose upon us. Epictetus takes the idea of a family relation as the paradigm case of a rôle (2.10.7-8). Our duties, as we saw above, are defined by relations: as a father or brother, we have certain obligations towards the other party to the relation. These obligations, therefore, belong to the 'rôle' of being a father or brother and thus they belong to us as the rôle belongs to us[83].

As we saw above, the exercise of our relations is intimately connected with the process of self-consciousness, self-contemplation and self-realization which seeks to make progress in the development of the *prohairesis* or *hêgemonikon* by the substitution of bad judgements with good. Likewise, rôles must be assumed to be conducted in this way. *Prosôpa* are our 'own' (*idia*), and so they are parts of our

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[81] Other *prosôpa* supplied by Fortune are those of the shipwrecked man, the poor man, the exile, the man of repute and the man without repute (p. 52 Hense). The good man plays each rôle *kalôs*. Our rôles, therefore, for the cynics, are frequently determined by the circumstances which Fate or Fortune imposes upon us; we should not try ot change these circumstances but prepare ourselves (*paraskeuazein*) ourselves for them, as sailors do (p.10 Hense).

[82] Dobbin (*op.cit.* p.86) defines *prosôpon* as an 'identity/social identity which is imposed by God or Fortune (*Ench.* 17). He is perhaps being a little *blasé* in identifying them with the 'things given' (*ta didomena*) of 4.3.11 (*op. cit.* p. 126)

[83] As we have seen, Epictetus does not allow his view that our first moral obligation is to the development of the self to obscure our moral responsibilities to others. While family members are not are not 'goods' (*agatha*), it is clear that family affection is both 'according to nature' and morally appropriate (*kalon*; 1.11.16).

selves. Although they refer, in part, to external circumstances and define our duties to persons and things external to us, they themselves are not externals. Just as we can, by undue concern for some external thing, betray the *prohairesis*, so we can, in the same way 'come close to forgetting our rôle' (1.2.14). Epictetus tells the story of an athlete, who, when told that he must have his private parts amputated to save his life, chose to die rather than depart from what he considered to be his own particular rôle (1.2.14). Exactly why this should be a betrayal of a rôle is not made clear at this point, but it is clear that some external advantage is not to be preferred to it[84]. So we must, in every circumstance, make a balanced judgement (*krisis*) of what our conduct should be which takes into account both externals and also our *prosôpon*:

> 'But the rational and the irrational fall out differently for different people, just as the good and evil fall out differently for different people and the advantageous and unadvantageous. For this reason we are particularly in need of education so that we can learn to harmonise the preconception of the rational and irrational to our individual circumstances in accordance with nature. With a view to the judgement of the rational and irrational we make use not only of the respective worths of external things but also each of us makes use of the matters which relate to our own individual *prosôpon*.'(1.2.5-7)

Hence, as Epictetus points out in the following sections, a slave, for example, has an experience of life which offers limited choices[85]: the question he has to ask himself is that given this, how is he, in individual circumstances, going to maintain the state of his *prohairesis*. The answer is to retreat to basic self-preservation by simply considering which indifferent is preferable to the other[86]. People in happier circumstances might want to be more scrupulous about their human dignity. As Epictetus says, it is our responsibility to know 'at what price to sell ourselves', in other

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[84] When we are likely to lose some external, we prepare ourselves by considering what psychological gain we might make in return; we thereby maintain our *prosôpon* as it ought to be (4.3.3).

[85] Hence Aristotle's claim, which Epictetus would have regarded as repugnant, that slaves cannot live 'according to *prohairesis*' (*Politics* 1280a34).

[86] ie. by drawing himself into Hierocles' 'first circle'.

words, in what way we are to apply our preconceptions, in respect of our circumstances and also of our capabilities. Epictetus goes as far as to say that the *prosôpon* is a kind of *criterion* (1.2.7), in other words, there is almost an epistemological import: We can discern if a particular impression of moral import is cognitive if, being conscious of our own *prosôpon*, the thought or action which is presented to us is in accordance with it[87].

In the context of a relation, therefore, a rôle is the part of the relation which belongs to us: what is on our 'side' as it were, and thus over which we have control. This 'subjective' aspect of the way in which we exercise rôles seems to be brought out more clearly in Epictetus' account. When we compare his account with that of Hierocles, we find that the latter usually refers to the *prosôpa* of others[88]. We determine our obligations towards other people by considering their rôles: their status and relation to us. Epictetus, however, concentrates on our own rôles and our own development of them, as part of our self-development.

The idea of a rôle allows Epictetus to use this idea of relation as a model for the way in which the self relates to the outside world. Our *prosôpa* do not simply refer to our relations to other people but to the way that we function in the world in all areas. Just as for the Cynics there were 'rôles' of being a shipwreck, a king or a beggar, so for Epictetus there are rôles of being a city-councillor, for example, or indeed the rôle of being a Cynic, which for Epictetus implies a character with special obligations to society as a whole as an example of the good life (eg. 3.22.69). Everyone must conduct himself according to two standards; a common standard which concerns itself with those things by means of which one is distinguished from the animals, and a 'private' or 'personal' standard which belongs to oneself (*idia*) and is defined by one's own 'occupation' (*epitêdeuma*) and *prohairesis* (3.23.5). Rôle is not

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[87] Thus stress is laid on *coming to be aware* of what is appropriate to one's *prosôpon* (1.2.30ff).

[88] So, after considering the gods and our mother-city as priorities for our moral action, Hierocles next asks whether we should take our parents next, or some *prosôpon* or other (p.56.34 Von Arnim). Likewise, in the passage where we are to consider the interests of others by imagining ourselves swapping places with them, it is his *prosôpon* which is considered (p.59.10ff cf. similar uses in the 'circles' passage p.62).

mentioned in this immediate context, but it is clear that it is to be understood here. Every action which we make is to be determined by the absolute moral decision-making which is dependent on the state of our mind, and also on the particular rôle which God, in his providence has given us, a rôle which is also profoundly connected with the state of the *prohairesis*.

So we find that rôles are determined not only by circumstances, but by capacities. We are told that if we attempt to adopt a rôle which is beyond our capacities, 'you shall both disgrace yourself in that one and neglect the one which you were able to fill' (*Ench.* 37). The answer is self-consciousness (1.2.30). We must understand our own capacities (*paraskeuai*)[89] in order to have the right attitude to the conduct of our rôles[90]. Epictetus picks up on a conventional argument for the self-consciousness of animals, which appears prominently in Hierocles (eg. *E.S.* 2.1-0; 20ff), that a bull, for example, is naturally aware that he has horns and that these can be used as a weapon of self-defence:

> 'For who is there that, having 'conceived' and been full of such great judgements, does not perceive his own capability (*paraskeuê*) and is thus impelled towards the appropriate tasks? But a bull is not ignorant of his own nature and capability (*paraskeuê*) when some wild animal appears nor does he await someone to urge him on, nor a dog, when it sees one of the wild animals. If I have the capability of a good man, shall I wait, so that you can prepare me for my own works? But now I don't have it, believe me. Why, then, do you wish me to dry up before my time, as you have dried out completely yourself.'[91]

The context of this passage is the consequence of seeking to deal with complex intellectual and moral matters before one is sufficiently mature: that is to say, in

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[89] 4.6.41ff; cf. Hierocles *E.S.* 1.50ff; 2.5

[90] Note that some *paraskeuai* are universal to all human beings, such as the ability to bear everything which comes to pass (1.6.37) and the ability to commune with oneself (3.13.6).

[91] 4.8.41-3, cf. 1.2.30, where, in a parallel passage, the matter is related to the *prosôpon* or *rôle* which brings in the question of the outward working of the self.

Epictetan terms, before one has fully understood the implications of the fact that one has only power over one's own psychic disposition and that one should concern oneself fully with that as the pursuit of the good. Epictetus thus compares these creatures to the man who has knowledge of his own capacities, and seeks to make appropriate decisions about his conduct accordingly (cf.3.23.4f). In a crucial parallel passage (1.2.30-2), Epictetus specifies that the kind of capacities which he refers to by *paraskeuai* in this context — and can be represented in the simile by the bull's natural equipment — are a determining factor in our rôles to the extent that our rôles are almost interchangeable with them[92]. As the previous sections of the chapter show, these determining capacities are what we might call 'strengths of character' which enable us to bear the vicissitudes of life in an appropriate way without desiring to engage in (probably futile) attempts to change our external circumstances. Our capacity to deal with these situations seems to be dependent to some extent upon a strength of the *prohairesis* and particular capacities given to us by God[93]. If we have these capacities, then we shall in due course become aware of them and be able to make the appropriate contribution to society and the better state of the world (2.1.31).

However, one notable feature of these capacities or preparations (*paraskeuai*) is that they are capable of development. Teles, as we noted above, suggested that we should prepare ourselves to meet the circumstances involved in the rôle of shipwreck, for example. However, Epictetus extends the sense of *paraskeuazesthai* beyond simply preparing oneself to meet a circumstance to actually developing a capacity: cognitively making ourselves better in some respect. So, we are told, in an extension of the simile which we discussed above, that, just as the bull does not become a bull at once, so a man does not become noble (*gennaios*); rather he has to undergo 'winter training' in order to prepare himself (*paraskeuasasthai*), and should not leap into situations which are not appropriate (*prosêkon*) for him. This is not necessarily possible for all *paraskeuai*, but it is clear that in some cases we can acquire new capabilities,

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[92] Likewise, the *prosôpa* which we have ought to be used by us as a criterion for determining what is rational and irrational for us, as well as our external circumstances (1.2.6-7; cf. 1.2.28).

[93] To be the sort of man that Socrates was, for example (1.2.33).

dispositions and powers by the use of impressions to strengthen the tension of the soul.

Rôles, it would seem, can be 'improved' in the same way (and as part of the same process) as we improve the state of the *prohairesis*. The conduct of the rôle is dependent on the overall condition of the *prohairesis* and the *prohairesis* is affected by the way in which we conduct our rôles[94]. We develop a clearer idea of what our rôle is: to work on the state of the *prohairesis* in respect of our conduct in a particular area of life.

It is a short step from this idea to the acquisition and development of rôles. We have already alluded to the idea that we can aspire to a rôle that is beyond our natural endowment, but this does not preclude a reasonable aspiration to some external expression of the self which we have not yet shown (1.29.4). So, just as Epictetus tells us that we can develop new faculties and skills (*dynameis* and *technai*), it would seem that we can aspire to a rôle, provided that it lies within the scale of the ability (*dynamis*) which we have. Dobbin is right to point out, then, that Epictetus fluctuates between an account in which rôles 'create agents', in the sense that the aspects of the rôle which are provided by us by God constrain our development and provide us with certain duties and capacities (eg. 2.10), and an account in which 'agents create rôles', in the sense that we have a degree of control over how we acquire and develop our rôles. It must always be borne in mind, however, that the first of these accounts is the one which ultimately has priority for Epictetus. We can only *act* within our rôles inasmuch as God's providence permits us to do so.

This control over the development of roles derives from the fact that our rôles are an aspect of the *prohairesis*. Its proper development is theirs, and they, like it, are strengthened by proper use of impressions and judgements. Dobbin correctly points out that our rôles are occasionally referred to by Epictetus as *onomata* ('names' or 'designations'). Thus they represent the self as it is available to be perceived and understood by persons external to ourselves. This corresponds to the 'objective' view

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[94] *Ench.* 37 where it is assumed that we may use our impressions wrongly in discerning what our proper roles are and thus 'assume' a role which is *hyper dynamin*. Hijmans 'A note on φύσις in Epictetus' (*Mnemosyne* 1967) points out (p.281) that the 'transition from the *prosopon* to *prohairesis* is a light one. (cf. 1.2.30-3)'.

of *prosôpon* which we saw reflected in Hierocles' account. Dobbin sees the *prosôpa* as mediating the internal and external poles of the self. As we saw, Epictetus also stresses a *subjective* view of our rôles in which we seek to act according to and develop the rôles which belong to us; rôles are *idia* and therefore an intimate part of the self. So the self has within its control the aspects of the self which are 'public' and external and which reflect the way in which we function in the external world. As we have noted on a number of occasions before, our external actions are not entirely within our power in the sense in which Epictetus understands that term. However, it is clear that the way in which the self seeks to operate in this external realm — how it presents itself as one of a series of causes in the world which might contribute towards events — is entirely within our power.

The rôles thus represent the outward extension of the self as Epictetus understands it. Unlike the earlier Stoics, who defined the self by *oikeiôsis* and extended the self by the extension outwards of *oikeiôsis*, Epictetus is restricted in his view of the self to the mind. He chooses therefore to represent the outward projection of the self, not in terms of the objects of its appropriation, but in terms of the aspect of the mind's own self-orientation which has some external thing as its subject-matter. Our rôle as Son is not concerned with our father or mother, but rather with ourselves acting properly in respect of our father or mother.

4.3.4 Dobbin attempts to clarify this relation between *prohairesis* and *prosôpon* by suggesting that *prohairesis* is the subjective self (*I*) and that *prosôpon* is the objective self (*me*)[95]. As we have seen, *prohairesis* is rather both subjective and objective (we

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[95] *ibid.* p.130. However, Dobbin seems undecided as to whether, behind the *prosôpa* the *prohairesis* remains 'aloof and inviolate', or rather '...yet the concept of pure self, ie., subjective self without objective content such as the *prosopa* provide would appear to be an illusion.'

Earlier, Dobbin has analyzed the self further:

> 'In the process, (realising its essence in engagement with the world) the self acquires levels of meaning and perspective. It can be analyzed, eg. as "I", "me" and "mine", the "I" being the centre of consciousness, intelligence and discretion, the "me" being the self's objective dress, and the "mine" being the contingent aspects of the personality.' (*ibid.* 124)

We can observe difficulties with this analysis. The use of 'mine' to describe

are able to 'show', for example, our judgements): *prosôpa*, on the other hand are material which make up the *prohairesis* in certain specific contexts[96]. Our *prosôpa* are *idia*, like our judgements (1.2.14); though the external things which they refer to are not 'ours', are alien to us, the *prosôpa* are not — they are features of our own dispositions. These features are given to us by God insofar as the circumstances in which we find ourselves are the result of fate. Furthermore, if our *prohairesis* is in a good state, we shall be able to react more consistently and more 'strongly' as it were to any given situation, and our rôles are therefore more important than those of others who are not so far down the way of progress[97]. Hence, this helps to resolve the problem of the rôle of the Cynic, which seems to be independent of social relations[98]: the rôle of the Cynic is an 'exceptional rôle' (*ibid.*) insofar as he has no social relations which would allow for the possibility that he might find influences from them which would cause him to concentrate upon them rather than upon himself. Thus he makes his relations and roles more simple in relation to the world and is able to function correctly in his judgements in every area of his life. He is the man who cultivates his own self (3.22.33) and thus keeps his disposition in accordance with nature[99].

4.3.5 This last point is particularly significant in the light of a much-discussed parallel to Epictetus' account of *prosôpon*, that is, the four *personae* referred to by Cicero in the *De Officiis* (1.107-115), representing a doctrine generally attributed to

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contingent aspects of the personality, such as relations, is deeply problematic. It is exactly Epictetus' desire, as we saw in the first section of this chapter that we turn what it 'ours' away from such things towards the inner self, or *prohairesis*, using what is 'ours' as equivalent to 'within our power' as the defining factor of the inner self.

[96] and thus can be temporary, like fatherhood (cf. Dobbin 162).

[97] So Dobbin need not be confused (*op.cit.* 163) that concern for the *prohairesis* above all things leads in Epictetus' mind to a 'greater commitment' to the role.

[98] cf. Dobbin p.146.

[99] the opposite of the man who concerns himself with all other things (3.22.32ff.)

Panaetius[100]. A comparison of this doctrine with Epictetus' view of *prosôpon* will help us to draw together some of the threads of this chapter. Two of the *personae*, according to this account, are given to us by nature (1.107), and a further two, come to us by additional means, the third by the chances of circumstances, and the fourth, by our own decision (*iudicio*). This division seems to echo that of Epictetus between *prosôpa* which are 'given' and 'acquired' (2.14.8). Furthermore, many of the features of these *personae* seem to be similar to those of Epictetus' *prosôpa*. The first is equivalent to the basic *physis* of man, which is one of Epictetus' *onomata* (2.10.1ff). Just as Epictetus defines human nature as to have a rational faculty which distinguishes us from the animals, and a moral responsibility, to keep the *prohairesis* as the controlling factor in our lives and also to use our rational powers to understand our place in the universe and to live accordingly[101], so Panaetius' first *persona* arises from our being 'participants in reason, and in its preeminence by which we raise ourselves above the animals.' (*Off.* 1.107). Likewise, it is the case that all right behaviour (*honestum decorumque*) derives from this nature. Whatever our individual capacities are, we must not act contrary to this[102]. So Panaetius identifies by the first *persona*, the basic activity of *oikeiôsis* in defining our moral activity and our ability to discern it[103].

The second of the two 'natural' *personae* corresponds closely to Epictetus' account of the influence of *paraskeuê* on the character. This is the longest by far of Cicero's descriptions, since it gives him an opportunity for a characteristic rhetorical passage on the respective characters of great Roman figures of the past (*ibid.* 108-9). It is emphasised by Panaetius that our *kathêkonta* are in some sense defined by our

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[100] cf. for example DeLacy: 'The Four Stoic *Personae*' *Ill. Class. Stud.* II (1977) who surmises that it comes from the treatise of Panaetius *Περὶ τοῦ Καθήκοντος* on which most of *Off.* 1 & 2 are based.

[101] Epictetus does not isolate this as a *prosôpon*, however, but rather as the '*epangelia*' of man (2.9.1ff). In other words, our appropriate conduct in respect of our basic human nature is much more fundamental than *prosôpon* refers to: to fail in our fulfilment of this 'promise' would seem to be to fail to be truly human at all.

[102] 110; cf. Gill *op.cit.* 180.

[103] cf. Dobbin *op.cit.* 137-8.

capabilities, echoing in some way Epictetus' idea that the 'rational' and 'irrational' are different for different people (1.2.5ff). Likewise, Panaetius advocates self-consciousness of our natural capabilities (*ibid.* 114) as the key to our moral conduct: how can we act according to *kathêkon* if we cannot discern what our own particular *kathêkonta* are? Consistency in life cannot be achieved by copying, since others will have different capabilities and corresponding duties. So we perform best in the rôles (*res*) to which we are best adapted.

Cicero, after his great rhetorical flourish, only briefly sets forth the third and fourth *personae* (ibid. 115), but these also, by their nature, seem to reflect aspects of Epictetus' account of *prosôpon*: clearly Epictetus believed that circumstances and our reactions to them went some way towards defining our *prosôpa* and likewise, that the *prohairesis* as the over-arching disposition of the *hêgemonikon* has the ability to shape them with its own judgements. Can we assume therefore, that Epictetus accepts Panaetius' framework, and that his own account of personality derives from or is influenced by this account? There are difficulties in the way of such a conclusion. The main difficulty lies in the multiplicity of *prosôpa* in Epictetus' account. Panaetius seems to assume that, either all human beings have four *personae*, or that all the aspects of our personality can be reduced to them. Epictetus, on the other hand, allows for more flexibility. Although he attributes to *prosôpa* different features, some of which correspond to Panaetius' *personae*, difficulties arise in attempting to map the *prosôpa* which he describes directly onto the Panaetian account.

For example, it is not immediately clear into which of the *personae* one would fit the Epictetan *prosôpon par excellence*, that is to say the family relation. One does not have relations with a father or brother on the basis of either universal human nature or, innate capability. Neither can it be said to be a matter of choice. The only category one might put such relation is that of *casus*, but this would be rather unsatisfactory from a Stoic perspective. Furthermore, where Epictetus divides relations into those which are natural and 'acquired' (2.14.8), it is clear that family relations are the ones which we are to imagine as 'natural'[104], which would rule

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[104] The order of Epictetus' list is: 'son, father, brother, citizen, husband, wife (or possibly, 'man, woman'), neighbour, fellow-traveller, ruler and subject'. The way in which Epictetus introduces the list implies that the 'natural' relations will come first,

them out as corresponding to Panaetius' third *persona*. Likewise, whereas Panaetius' account of different rationales for ethics places the difference wholly in the *second persona* (*ibid.* 115), Epictetus discusses it in terms of Panaetius' *third persona*, in the discussion of the conduct of life if one finds oneself a slave (1.2.8-11).

In other words, even if Epictetus is aware of Panaetius' division, he does not choose to accept it in the form in which it is presented. DeLacy may be right to suggest that Epictetus is reverting to some pre-Panaetian stage in the development of *prosôpon* (*op.cit.* 207), but, if so, it is a little disappointing to find no evidence of this, unless one assumes that the account in Hierocles derives directly from some pre-Panaetian source. However, we have seen in this chapter, Hierocles is an independent, though orthodox thinker, and so it is difficult to draw any clear conclusion. On the other hand, it is clear, that if Epictetus does derive the general idea of *prosôpon* from some 'Middle Stoic', as it were, source, that he develops a much more flexible approach to what can constitute a rôle. In particular, the overlap between the *prohairesis* and *prosôpa*: the ability of the individual soul to work on any *prosôpon* gives considerable latitude for our autonomy.

4.3.6 DeLacy understandably sees a problem in the Panaetian account:

> 'The pluralization of the roles would seem to destroy the individuality of the moral agent; he is not one person but four, playing four roles that somehow result in a common act appropriate to them all. Where is the unity of the moral agent to be found?'[105]

DeLacy's solution is to suggest that the Stoics define an individual person as a unique 'set of relations' rather than a 'unique essence or substance'. This owes rather more to Epictetus than Panaetius. However, Epictetus does have a *rationale* which provides a viable alternative to the Aristotelian substance, in his use of the *prohairesis* as a self which brings together our relations and also takes account of our

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and this would seem to apply then to the relations as far as 'citizen' (which Epictetus, as a Stoic 'cosmopolitan' would take as 'natural' cf. 2.10.4), leaving the others as quite plausibly 'acquired', since they are dependent upon external circumstances.

[105] *op.cit.* 120-1; cf. Gill *op.cit.* 177

natural capabilities. By positing the *prohairesis* as an overarching disposition of the *hêgemonikon*, which is involved in every activity of the mind, in every use of impressions, and the rôles and relations of our individual lives as relative dispositions which are governed by it, he draws together our unique relations into the unique life of the soul — of the self. So, to attend to the *prohairesis* as we ought, entails our maintaining our relations.

Christopher Gill[106] raises the question of how the Panaetian *personae* seem to concern themselves with *personality* as well as *personhood*. So, we derive our personhood, as it were, from the first *persona* which is our universal human 'nature', and our 'personality', natural and acquired, from the other three. However, as Delacy showed us, the rigidity of the four *personae* seemed to in some way detract from the unity of the self. Although we may refer to each of these *personae* as reference-points for choices[107], it is not clear from Cicero's account what the psychological link between them is. Gill is quite correct to observe that for Cicero the rôles 'have a weight and value of their own...rather than functioning as contexts for the exercise of rational moral agency'[108]. The advantage of Epictetus' *prosôpa* seems to be exactly this latter feature, by which they guarantee the unity of the soul's activity in all contexts. Epictetus' view of *prohairesis* and *prosôpon* draws together personhood and personality. The self, the *prohairesis* is a self-reflecting and self-governing disposition. As such it is both the centre of our personhood, since it distinguishes what is our essential human feature, rationality, and also our *personality*, inasmuch as our judgements are our *idia*. *Prosôpa*, as we have seen, are also *idia*: they are unique dispositions which belong to us, and are within our control, relative to people and circumstances which are external to us. They are dependent on our own disposition, a disposition which is in part shaped by our *paraskeuai* from God and our own judgements. So our various *prosôpa* are, by definition dependent upon these factors also. But *prosôpa* are, as it were, the *extrinsic* qualities of the self. Its *intrinsic*

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[106] *op,cit.* 169-70.

[107] Gill *op.cit.* 176.

[108] *op.cit.* p.192.

qualities are defined by the state of the *prohairesis*[109].

So Epictetus brings together personhood and personality in a unified moral self. The self is not simply the mind, but also its content. The *prohairesis*, in as much as it is a state of the *hêgemonikon*, represents both aspects. As we all have a *hêgemonikon* which is in *some* state, we have an enduring *self*; a self which is further defined by those rôles and capacities which are given to us by God through circumstances. Inasmuch as our mind has a particular, and ever-changing content based on our own judgements, we can be said to have an individual personality, which we have the power to develop as we choose.

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[109] So Dobbin:

'What we find unique and original in Epictetus really all has to do with *prohairesis*. What is interesting in the *prosopon* theme, is that by bringing to it the power of his reflection on *prohairesis*, he deepens and enriches the concept considerably.'

4.4 In conclusion, we can observe that Epictetus brings to the Stoic idea of the self and human identity a number of emphases which seem (if not actually to be original to his thinking) to represent new developments in the teaching of the Stoic school. The fundamental difference, as we observed, lies in Epictetus' explicit and unequivocal identification of the human self with the mind, represented by the 'rational faculty' or *prohairesis*. Epictetus rejects the idea that the true self can encompass the body in any sense. Not, as some in the ancient world asserted, because the body was a source of corruption, but because it was outwith our power, according to Epictetus' understanding of that term. That which was outwith our power was not truly ours and thus could not be our selves.

Adopting this view, Epictetus was obliged to abandon the traditional Stoic account of the self which relied upon 'appropriation' (*oikeiôsis*). That man is appropriated towards his body Epictetus does not deny, but this appropriation does not determine the limits of the self, as it had done for earlier Stoics. Epictetus' self is not the locus of mere advantage, as a self determined by appropriation would be, but rather by the moral good, which for Epictetus, as much as for the earlier Stoics, is restricted to the mind and its state. It is this, for Epictetus, which is within our power.

To say that the mind is a self which is within our power is, however, to presuppose a further point which is clear from Epictetus' account of the self, that the self is not simply the mind but also its content. It is this content which we are to work upon to improve the state of the mind and thus seek to achieve the good and the perfect realization of the self. The first step in this self-realization lies in self-knowledge. For the adult self to develop in the way in which God and nature intend, it must first realize that the mind is the self, and that only through the development of what is within our power can we bring our selves to this state of perfection. This self-knowledge is significant to Epictetus: not only does the potential to acquire it make us different from the animals, but one of the most important features of it is that we should know how and in what respects we do differ from the animals. The worst betrayal of the self lies in the betrayal of human nature by adopting the bodily priorities which properly belong to animals; relying, in other words on appropriation.

This restriction of the domain of the self also affects its 'external' aspect. While the earlier Stoics had used appropriation to determine our relations with other

people and things outwith the self by extending appropriation outwards beyond the body, Epictetus must find a mechanism which takes account, both of the absence of this mechanism, and the fact that persons and things external to us are outwith our power and the domain of the self and its interests. It is here that he adapts the notion of a *prosôpon* or rôle. For Epictetus all our relations with people, things and circumstances in the world external to ourselves are rôles which are governed by, and are aspects of, the mind or *prohairesis*. These rôles represent a wide range of capacities and attitudes towards these external things, all of which, if they are to be used properly, are to be governed by the over-arching moral judgement that these things are of no significance towards one's own good, since they are not 'within our power'. That notwithstanding, we must have an appropriate disposition towards them, and it is this area which is the domain of the *prosôpon*. The *prohairesis* serves the purpose of drawing together all these disparate rôles into a single consciousness.

The self of Epictetus is therefore a single, mature, adult consciousness which is restricted to our mental and moral activity, and excludes the body and everything else external to the mind. It is our one true possession and the one thing over which we have complete control: the locus both of our autonomy and our good. We are, as Epictetus tells us, *prohairesis*.

Chapter 5: 'Use of impressions' and the epistemology of Epictetus.

5.1.1 In chapters 1 and 2 we considered the primacy of mental activity in Epictetus' view of human life. This mental activity, we observed, was our most significant *human* activity: it was the basis of our uniquely human nature, distinguishing us from non-rational animals, and also of our individual 'selfhood'. Furthermore, we saw that the key to this mental activity, as had been the case for the earlier Stoics, lay in our responses to impressions, impressions which came, not only from outwith ourselves, but also from within the mind itself:

> 'But you have the power to ponder the divine dispensation and each of the divine matters at the same time as human, and at one time be moved in the senses by tens of thousands of things, and at the same time in the mind; at the same time being moved in an 'assenting' way by some things, and a 'refusing assent' or 'suspending judgement' way with regard to others; and you guard in your soul so many impressions (*typous*) of many and varied objects, and, moved by them, you fall into mental images of the same form as those which impressed you in the first place, and thus you preserve skills and memories, one on top of another, derived from tens of thousands of objects.' (1.14.7-8).

The mind, Epictetus tells us, is designed specifically, both to receive and to process impressions[1]. What is clear, however, is that the mind is capable of engaging in processes which involve not only responding to individual impressions, but retaining them in such a way as allows them to be judged alongside other impressions, and, furthermore, to combine and alter them in order to generate *within the mind itself* new, complex impressions. These complex impressions will form the

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[1]cf. also (1.6.10):

> 'Of this kind is the constitution of the intellect (*dianoia*), according to which, when we hit upon the objects of sense, we are not simply impressed by them, but we pick out something, and subtract and add and combine these very things through them, and, by Zeus move from some of them to others which are related in some way; are these not enough to stir up people and convert them towards not leaving out the artificer'?

basis of our future judgements. We are also informed that there are three possible responses to an impression: to assent, to refuse assent, and to 'suspend judgement', that is, to retain the impression in some way in order to make a more definite judgement upon it at a later stage.

Inevitably this mental activity involves what might be called 'epistemological' issues. Epictetus tells us — rather conventionally perhaps — that impressions come to us (whether from outwith ourselves or from within the recesses of our own mind) in four ways: either (i) things are, and seem to be, or (ii) are not, and do not seem to be, or (iii) are, and seem not to be, or (iv) are not and seem to be (1.27.1)[2]. The question arises as to how we are to judge their authenticity, since it is the *ergon* of an educated man to get this right (*ibid.* 2). We have already considered in previous chapters the enormous *moral* significance which Epictetus attaches to accuracy in judging impressions: while this is particularly true when a misplaced reaction might lead to an excessive response of a conative type, such as an appetence or impulse, it remains the case that any false judgement is harmful to the state of the *hêgemonikon*.

The key idea, which we explored to some extent in chapter 3, is that our response is a '*use* of impressions'. It is active and not passive in nature. Hence that dispositional aspect of our mental activity on which Epictetus places so much moral emphasis is called the *prohairesis*, a term which implies 'choice' and is, as we have seen, a disposition to make certain choices. Epictetus draws an important implication out of this fact. We are required, lest we fall into error, to have continual attention towards the impressions which we receive (4.12.1ff). We assent, as Epictetus remarks, to things because they *appear* to be the case, and, as we noted in chapter 3, it is the *nature* of the soul to be attracted to what is true (3.3.1ff). However, as Epictetus has told us, there are impressions which appear to represent things as they are, but do not in fact do so. One of Epictetus' definitions, therefore, of the 'beginning of philosophy' is the rejection of 'bare seeming' (*to psilôs dokoun*; 2.11.13).

'Attention', therefore, is significant because we must not allow ourselves to

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[2] Of which the last is presumably the cause of most concern, and most dangerous to the perceiver, cf. *Ench.* 1.5.

be 'swept away' by an impression (2.18.27). As we noted in our discussion of what is within our power in chapter 3, error and passion arise from the surrender of our power to choose our own response to an impression and allowing ourselves to assent to impressions willy-nilly, thereby giving up the *activity* of 'use of impressions' for a kind of passivity. Impressions are not there to be 'surrendered to', but rather to be 'overcome' (1.26.10). What is to be avoided is 'plausibilities' in impressions (*pithanotêtes*; 2.22.6)[3]. The third *topos* of philosophy, the one which is devoted to epistemological matters, is concerned with 'the persuasive and inducing' (*pithana kai helkystika*; 3.12.15). What it aims to teach us is that we should not accept an impression without examination, without considering whether it truly represents what it purports to represent, whether it has the 'token from nature', which is the mark of the Stoic 'cognitive impression' (*phantasia katalêptikê*). Rather we are to 'wait' and further 'test' the further credentials of the impression. Of which more in the next section.

5.1.2 Epictetus, as we noted in Chapter 2 (**2.2.6**), regards the technical investigation of epistemological matters to be 'for advanced students only'. The study of assent, and related issues is the third 'topos', one which is to be approached only when the *prokoptôn* has made visible progress in using impressions better in these conative fields (3.2.5). However, as we shall notice in due course, the abiding rule or 'canon' which governs our approach to these conative responses: 'is this matter within or outwith my power', is itself an epistemological rule. Epictetus sees some advantage, however, in approaching it from a 'concrete' or 'practical' angle. It is in the *first topos*, Epictetus tells us, that it is most obviously proved that we do not apply our preconceptions properly (2.17.6). In other words, it is in deciding the things towards which we ought most properly to exercise impulse that we fail to refer the impressions which we receive to the criterion of truth which Nature has taught us.

The process which Epictetus calls the 'use of impressions' is therefore central to the workings of his psychology. It is associated with the so-called '*telos*-formula',

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[3] This may, of course, be a polemical point aimed at those Academic philosophers for whom *pithanotês* was the criterion for assent.

the expression of the end of life in Stoic thought: 'living according to nature' (3.3.1; 4.10.26; etc). In relation to this it is also mentioned frequently in the context of the *prohairesis* (2.22.29; 4.5.23); both of them are faculties (*dynameis*) closely associated with the 'reasoning faculty'(1.1.6). With one of the most significant aspects of the *prohairesis* being the fundamental *dihairesis* between those things which are 'goods' and within our power, and within the domain of the *prohairesis*, and those which are not, the 'externals' it is not surprising that we find the 'use of impressions' connected closely with this fundamental judgement, and even, in places equated with human freedom as being concerned especially with the activity of the *prohairesis* within our power (eg. 1.12.34; 2.19.32):

> 'You are not fated to be able to be able to have concern for the external things and also your own *hêgemonikon*. If you wish for the former, let go of the latter; the alternative is that you will have neither the latter nor the former, since you will be divided in both directions. If you wish for the former you must let the latter go. The oil will be poured out, my little bits of furniture will be lost, but I will remain free from passion. There will be a fire while I am out and my books will be lost, but I shall use my impressions according to nature. (4.10.25-5)

In other words, it would be a false judgement to believe that the morally indifferent 'external things' were of any real importance: 'use of impressions' involves the comparison of the impression that 'this is a disaster' with the developed concept contained in the *prohairesis* that 'external events are not in fact of any real importance to me'. Thus 'use of impressions' lies at the very heart of Epictetus' philosophical system. It remains my *ergon* in any given situation to exercise 'use of impressions' in accordance with nature[4].

The opposite of using impressions in accordance with nature is to use them recklessly:

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[4] So the *prohairesis* (*Ench.* 13).

'I myself said once to Rufus[5] when he was upbraiding me because I had not found the missing premise in a particular syllogism. "It's not as if I had burned down the Capitol!", I said. He replied, "Slave, here the missing clause *was* the Capitol!" Are the only errors in life to burn down the Capitol and murder one's father, or rather that to make use of one's impressions recklessly and foolishly and at random, and not to follow an argument[6], or demonstration or sophism, or altogether not to see in question and answer how it refers to oneself or not, is none of these things an error?' (1.7.32-3)

The anecdote is a humorous one, but Epictetus is making a serious point. The mental processes involved in 'use of impressions', even when they are being used in tutorial-room logic-chopping, are not to be taken lightly, because their consequences are serious. Thus we should not 'use our impressions' recklessly or fail to take the time to examine them properly (1.20.11). Mere book-learning cannot help us in this regard: it is not simply enough to know the principles of epistemology, it is necessary to *do* it:

'What is the cause of this?[7] It is that we have never read for the sake of *this*, we have never written for the sake of *this*: that in our actions we should use according to nature the impressions which impinge upon us, but we lay off of it (our study) at the point of learning what is said and how to be able to explain it to someone else, solving the syllogism and analysing the hypothesis.' (4.4.14-5)

'Using our impressions in accordance with nature', then, is an activity which is not simply concerned with knowing things, but with actually making proper judgements. What is significant for our development is the resulting dispositional state. The hypothetical syllogism referred to above is a matter of indifference in itself, but, says Epictetus, the judgement (*krisis*) about it is far from indifferent; rather it is

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[5] Musonius Rufus, the Roman statesman and philosopher who was Epictetus' teacher in early life.

[6] or Reason (*logôi*).

[7] our failure to put into practice the principles we learnt in books (4.4.8-13).

'knowledge, opinion or being deceived' (*epistêmê, doxa, apatê*). These three states are all potential mental dispositions which might result from the use of an impression. Only the first of these would be coveted by a Stoic.

5.1.3 Epictetus speaks of the 'end' of human activity in the following terms:

> 'The subject-matter of the fine and good man is his own *hêgemonikon*, that of the doctor and physiotherapist is the body, and the land is the subject-matter of the farmer; but the function of the fine and good man is to use his impressions according to nature.'[8]

Epictetus here distinguishes between the 'subject-matter' of the Stoic wise man and his 'function'. In other words, the object of his functional activity *qua* a man who seeks to act wisely and infallibly in moral matters is his own *hêgemonikon*, whereas the *activity* itself is the 'use of impressions'. In our discussion of the psychology of Epictetus we saw that the *hêgemonikon* is disposed in certain ways according to the impressions and judgements which are contained within it. The *prohairesis,* and therefore the *hêgemonikon* itself, must be kept 'pure' by the examination of our judgements, and the progressive replacement of bad judgements with good ones[9]. The process of 'use of impressions' must include some mechanism by which judgements are made about the truth or otherwise of impressions, and they are systematized into the complex concepts and judgements which are then stored in the *prohairesis*. Provision is also made, as we shall see, for the process by which competing judgements are compared and their compatibility with the system built on preconceptions is adjudged. This, as we have seen, is crucial to Epictetus' version of the Stoic doctrine of moral progress, the ultimate goal of which is the purity of the

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[8] 3.3.1. cf. *Ench.* 1.1:

> 'Of existent things, some are in our power, some not in our power. In our power are conception, impulse, appetence, aversion, and in one word, all those things which are our tasks; not within our power, are the body, possessions, reputations, state offices and in one word, all those things which are not our tasks.'

[9] 'Right judgements about the materials create a good *prohairesis*, crooked and twisted ones make it bad.' (1.29.3)
The process is described at 2.18.8-11.

hêgemonikon or *prohairesis*[10].

As Epictetus tells us, we are to 'embellish' our reason: to improve its state by the right use of impressions, thereby incorporating further sound judgements. It is thus an essential human characteristic that we have the capacity of self-consciousness and self-reflection, the 'rational use of impressions' referred to above which enables us to shape our own mind and disposition to conform more and more with nature. So we 'embellish' the *prohairesis* by the eradication of base judgements[11]. Thus, *rational* use of impressions is an essential feature of the quality which distinguishes us as human beings, and to use them properly is to realise our end as human beings and thus to live according to our nature.

This process of working on the *prohairesis* was, as we saw in a previous chapter, the basis on which Epictetus defined the *prohairesis* as the self (3.1.40; 2.10.1; 4.5.12): the object of self-reflection. Epictetus expressed this self-reflection by placing the 'good' where the self was, the good being as we saw, the *prohairesis* in the right state, in which function the 'right use of impressions' is associated with it (2.22.29). Likewise, selfhood is described by Epictetus as that which is 'ours', that over which we can be said to have some sense of its belonging, which again is something which is attributed to 'use of impressions' (3.24.69; *Ench.*6). When we use impressions, we engage in that activity which changes the nature of that thing which is essentially our self as the object of our self-reflection.

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[10] So, for example, the man who is making progress will never assent except to a cognitive impression (3.8.4).

[11] 3.1.42, where the sentiment is put into the mouth of Socrates to Alcibiades (*Alcib.* I 131d).

5.2.1 We suggested in chapter 2 (2.1.1) that Epictetus uses 'use of impressions' as a generic term in much the same way that the earlier Stoics used 'assent'. So, for example, impulse, and appetence, which throughout the Stoic tradition are regarded as assents to particular kinds of impressions, are subsumed under the 'faculty which makes use of impressions' (1.1.12). Assent, however, has its own status within Epictetus' system: it is the subject of the third *topos* of philosophy (cf. 3.2.1-2), and is described as an *ergon* of the soul[12], just as 'using impressions according to nature' (3.1.1). Like the use of impressions, it is clearly 'within our power' (*Fr.*9, cf. 4.1.69). Equally, though direct references to cognition are rare in Epictetus, he insists on the importance of our assenting to the cognitive impression and dissenting from the incognitive. So, for example, one of the important features of 'progress' is that as we progress, we become less likely to assent to an incognitive impression[13]. Proper assent, therefore is, like the use of impressions, a matter dependent upon our disposition; the better our disposition, the more likely we are to assent properly. In the early Stoic account one way of assenting improperly, which ultimately led to assent to the incognitive, was to assent precipitately (eg. Plut. *St.Rep.* 1056f). Since it was the characteristic of the wise man, according to the Stoics, to assent *firmly*, and from a stable disposition, he never assents precipitately, or thereby, to the incognitive impression (Stobaeus. 2.111.18-112.8). The 'inferior' man, on the other hand, assents 'in advance' of cognition, and, as Plutarch tells us, out of 'weakness' (*St. Rep.* 1057b). His disposition is such that he does not assent infallibly, like the wise man. This aspect of the matter is one which, as we shall see, is particularly of concern to Epictetus, who describes 'unprecipitate assent' as one of the 'sinews of the philosopher' (2.8.29).

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[12] 4.11.6. this is, of course, a designation which it shares with impulse and appetence in this passage.

[13] 3.8.4:

> 'If we make a habit of this (ie. testing impressions to see whether or not their subject-matters fall within the domain of the *prohairesis*), then we shall make progress; we shall never assent except to something from which a cognitive impression arises.'

5.2.2 The cognitive impression is one such that it is suitable to be assented to in such a way that cognition takes place. Its essential nature, which distinguishes it from other impressions, is that it is such that it arises from what is, and cannot possibly arise from what is not. In other words, given that an impression is defined as representing exactly the cause which brought it about, the cognitive impression is one which represents an actual object or concept, rather than an imaginary or mistaken one[14]. This was a description which was subject to criticism throughout the history of the Stoa, and various attempts were made to clarify the nature of the cognitive impression in the face of the argument that two impressions, one cognitive and another incognitive might be indistinguishably similar (eg. DL 7.177). Stoic sources tell us that 'clarity and distinctness' was thought to be adequate for most intents and purposes provided that there was 'no impediment', but reference is also made to the requirement of the individual to be able to discern the cognitive impression. So, for example, the impressions of the mad or 'melancholic' are characteristically incognitive (*M.* 7.247). Conversely the 'wise man' has a skill (ie. a developed and stable conceptual disposition based upon previous cognitions) which enables him to distinguish between apparently identical impressions (Cicero *Academica* 2.57). In other words the state of mind, or disposition of the *hêgemonikon* of the perceiver is a relevant factor in whether or not the impression will 'appear' to him or her as being cognitive[15].

For the Stoics the cognitive impression is the principal criterion of truth. Assent to a cognitive impression is a cognition, a state described as 'between opinion (or ignorance) and knowledge'. These cognitions, when grouped together, form concepts, some of which we naturally tend to develop: the so-called preconceptions

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[14] Sextus *M.* 8.85; cf. Long *Hellenistic Philosophy* p.127

[15] So Michael Frede ('Stoics and Sceptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions' in *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, Oxford 1987 p.154) makes an important distinction:

> 'It may be objected that impressions are supposed to be passive affections of the mind, whereas the mind's conceptualization of an object would be an active contribution of the mind to the impression. But it has to be kept in mind that the Stoics characterize an impression as a passive affection of the mind to contrast it with the act of assent and not to deny that the mind has any part in the formation of a thought.'

(which become a secondary criterion of truth). The influence of nature here is typical of the Stoic world-view and is no doubt connected to the involvement of *oikeiôsis* in the development of cognition — just as the cognitive impression has a peculiar quality which marks it out as the bearer of truth, likewise there is something in the way we are naturally constituted which draws us towards assenting to the cognitive impression: cognition is, as it were, an object of our appropriation (Cicero *Fin.* 3.17-18), and it is in our nature to seek to know the truth and to use what we know to be true to assess our further investigation.

5.2.3 It is characteristic of Epictetus' account of 'use of impressions' that, when we meet an impression, we need not, and indeed should not automatically assent to it (cf. *Ench.* 1 & 34). As we have seen, the principal difference between ourselves and animals is that we have 'understanding in the use of impressions'. Animals have the ability to use impressions, but not to 'distinguish' or 'discern' them *rationally* (*diakrinei*, 1.6.18). It is this same ability, this discernment, which Epictetus requires us to employ in the face of impressions which are cognitive or incognitive (4.4.13):

> 'For this reason, the greatest and first *ergon* of the philosopher is to test impressions and discern them and apply none of them which are untested.'[16]

We see then, the full significance of the suggestion that assent is an *ergon*: it is part of our human nature that we can intelligently assess the cognitive status of impressions, and decide whether or not they are appropriate to be assented to, and the full realisation of human nature lies in doing this properly. Assent, for rational human beings is an activity of reason which is available to us by virtue of our being rational. Epictetus expands (1.6.10).

Whereas non-rational animals are merely impressed upon by impressions, and can only react in one way thereto, the rational human mind has a constitution which enables it to pay attention to more than one impression at any one time, and thereby to use various techniques in order to assess them[17]. This assessment results in either

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[16] 1.20.7. cf. also 4.8.3-4 and *Ench.* 45, where different terminology is used.

[17] cf. Long *op.cit.* p.124

of two basic results: assent or non-assent, which in turn may be immediate, outright refusal of assent or 'suspension of judgement' (*epochê*)[18]. Epictetus concurs:

> 'If it is true what is said by the philosophers, when they say that as for all men there is a single principle of assent in the feeling that something is so and in immediate refusal of assent the feeling that it is not so and in withholding judgment the feeling that it is unclear, so there is a single principle of impulse towards something, in the feeling that it is advantageous and that it is impossible to judge something to be expedient and still yearn for something else and judge one thing dutiful and be impelled towards something else — then if so, why are we any longer angry with the many?' (1.18.1-2)

The point of this passage as a whole is that the origin of any action or thought is a corresponding impression[19] and that those whose soul is not well-disposed will characteristically assent to that which *seems* to be true, and thus cannot be entirely blamed for getting it wrong[20]. However, suspension of judgement, which is what the sensible person will do, if in doubt, must work on the assumption that immediate assent is not necessitated by the impression itself, but that we can become aware of the propositional content of an impression without assenting, and furthermore be ins some way influenced or directed by it without assenting. Epictetus denotes this temporary 'change' with the term *paschein* which we find in this and several other passages (cf. 1.2.3, 28.3&13, 29.7, 2.15.7), which has been translated 'feel'[21]. *Pathos* is also used in the terminology of the earlier Stoics to denote the preliminary stage in the soul's relationship with a new impression ([Aëtius] 4.12.1-5 = *SVF.*

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[18] So, where two or more different impressions on the same topic appear, suspension of judgement is the appropriate response (Plut.*St.Rep.* 1056ef).

[19] which we are by nature inclined to assent to if it appears to be a true one (1.28.3)

[20] So Epictetus tells us (1.28.3) that the soul cannot be willingly deprived of truth: when it assents to a falsehood, it was because it *seemed* to be true.

[21] This sense of *paschein* will have to be distinguished from 'passion' for reasons which will become obvious in due course: it is of the essence of a 'passion' that it is the result of the actual assent to an impression and its installation in the *hêgemonikon*.

2.54), as stage at which we receive information, but the impression has no actual consequences as to whether or how we form a view[22]. Epictetus seems to be suggesting that there might be an additional stage in the process: first we receive an impression which is involuntary. Secondly we have a 'feeling', which is equally involuntary, and which may well, if we are not sufficiently vigilant, influence us towards a response to the impression. Last of all we assent and form a judgement: an activity which is entirely within our power.

So, for Epictetus, as for the earlier Stoics, the impression can make its presence felt in the individual without having been actually assented to. In other words, assent brings about a *dogma* and a change of disposition, but it is still possible for and impression to retain its presence without being 'installed' in this way, long enough for it to be subject to greater mental scrutiny. This 'feeling' is a 'cause' of acting and thinking, but it is clearly not the principal cause[23], which is rather the state of the soul, and the decision how to assent to the impression. The well-educated and developed disposition will obviously respond correctly in the long run, but others may not[24]. Thus Epictetus imagines how this would work with respect to

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[22] DL 7.49:

> 'Impression comes first, then mind (*dianoia*) which has the capability of using language, expresses in a reasonable statement what it receives (*paschei*) from the impression.'

[23] So Bonhöffer suggests that the mind is passive *re* the 'content' of impressions (*Epictet* p.127 cf. Epictetus 2.7.11), which is satisfactory, subject to the proviso insisted upon by Frede.

[24] Hence this is probably the phenomenon described in Fr.9 (Aulus Gellius *NA.* 19.1.14-16. cf. Augustine *Civ. Dei* 9.4):

> 'Visa animi (quas φαντασίας philosophi appellant), quibus mens hominis prima statim specie accidentis ad animum rei pellitur, non voluntatis sunt neque arbitraria, sed vi quadam sua inferunt sese hominibus noscitanda; probationes autem (quas συγκαταθεσεις vocant), quibus eadem visa noscuntur, voluntariae sunt fiuntque hominum arbitratu'

Thus, according to Gellius, Epictetus tells us that even the wise man may find himself growing pale at the sight of an apparent evil or fearful thing even although he has not yet assented. The inexperienced or wicked mind is convinced by this appearance and thus assents. Thus impressions as this passage shows, have the ability to impose themselves to some extent on any mind, and this, for those who do not have a *prohairesis* in the right state will result in their assent. However, assent itself

counterfactual situations:

> 'What is the proof of this? "Feel, if you can, that it is night" That's impossible. "Try not to feel that it is day" That's impossible. "Feel, or try not to feel that the stars are even." That's impossible.' (1.28.3)

We can conclude from this that 'feeling' refers to a response to an impression which is based only on the *immediately* available evidence. Thus, assuming a situation that one is conscious of light outside, one cannot *feel* that it is night, even though one might in fact assent to the impression that it is, on further reflection, having discovered by investigation that it is in fact dark outside and that the light was a street-lamp. Likewise, one has to suspend judgement on the question of whether or not the stars are even. It is clearly of some significance that Epictetus does not use the term *dogma* of the results of these 'feelings', but the expression *krithen* instead. He warns us at 2.15.4ff. that it is absurd to build any kind of *eutonia* or *asphaleia* upon them, or indeed to stand by them as if they were right judgements. Any thought might 'enter our heads', even to murder one's tutor (*ibid.* 12), but this does not mean, by any stretch of the imagination that one ought to carry it out[25].

5.2.4 We can find a corresponding view attributed to the earlier Stoics in a passage in Sextus. He tells us that the 'convincing' impression is one which makes a 'smooth' movement in the soul, and as such is able to induce assent: this is the impression 'that it is day' which Epictetus describes here as a *pathos* which one cannot 'feel' to be

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is within the control of the *prohairesis* (volutariae sunt = *prohairetikai eisin*), and thus the state of the *prohairesis* which is within the control of the individual, is the determining factor of the actual assent. The particular relevance of this passage is the implicit distinction being made between the two senses of *pathos*. The 'feeling' which we have been discussing as the 'force' of an impression is not the classic Stoic 'passion' *which requires a definite assent*: the very thing refused it here by the wise man.

[25] Epictetus suggests (using the example of Menelaus' emotional estimation of Helen's worth) that if people were less carried away by such 'feelings' things might well have turned out differently for them. (1.28.13; cf. 1.2.3)

wrong[26]. Likewise, the improbable impression is of the kind such that Epictetus claims that we cannot 'feel' that it is the case. Those described by Sextus as neither one nor the other are those which are such that we cannot have a *pathos* either way. Neither Epictetus nor Sextus speaks of assent at this point, although Epictetus tells us that the *topos* of assent is connected with those things which are 'convincing and inducing' (3.12.15). It is clearly possible to assent to any of these impressions; what is important is Epictetus' emphasis on the state of *pathos* as an involuntary stage in the process. As its name suggests, it is not a 'use' of the impression, but is the point at which the 'use of impressions' begins[27]; from then on we have to take responsibility:

> 'Make an effort, therefore, to say at once to every harsh (*tracheiai*) impression, "You are an impression and not at all the thing which appears". Then examine it fully and test it with the standards (*kanosi*) which you have, and in this first thing especially, whether it is concerned with the things within our power or the things not within our power; and if it is concerned with the things which are not within our power let this be to hand: "It is nothing to me"' (*Ench.* 1.5)

This passage describes one of the processes involved with 'use of impressions': that of delaying assent to an impression while it may be tested. The terminology is significant. We observed above that the 'convincing' impression, the one which does not immediately seem to be counterfactual, induces the non-reflective person to assent because it makes a 'smooth movement' (*leion kinêma*) in the soul. Epictetus here describes an appropriate response to an impression which has a 'harsh' effect. In other words, this is the impression which Sextus describes as 'unconvincing'. So, the correct initial response, as Epictetus suggests, is to, as it were, say to the impression, that it is not the *phainomenon*, that is to say that it does not truly represent its cause:

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[26] So, for Epictetus, the truth has particular force in enabling us to be led towards assenting to it (3.3.1-4).

[27] So 1.28.12-13 where we are told that the *Iliad* is nothing but 'impressions and the use of impressions', but it begins with Paris having a *pathos* of stealing Helen. How he then 'used' this impression was the cause of the further events.

the thing of which it is allegedly an impression[28]. However, lest we make an error at this stage, Epictetus suggests that, this reservation notwithstanding, we should then consider its subject-matter:

> 'Then, whenever the impression bites you (for this is not in your power) fight against it with your reason bring it down in the struggle, do not let it grow strong nor lead you on to further consequences by creating whatever fictions it wishes in whatever way it wishes.' (3.24.108)

So an impression which makes us 'feel' in a particular way can lead to bad assents and judgements. As in the early Stoa, reason is the judge of impressions and our assent to those impressions is in our power (cf. Alexander. *De Fato* cp.11). Reason provides us with a dispositional state which can resist these impressions, and gives us material to draw upon which allows us to discount their content, should we so wish.

5.2.5 Epictetus speaks of 'waiting and testing' as an application of the use of *epochê*. This seems to be one of the standard approaches to deciding whether an impression is cognitive or not (2.18.24ff., 19.6&14, *Ench.* 34). Epictetus speaks in this passage of the *dihairesis* between those things which are within our power and those which are not[29]. What this passage indicates is that the correct judgement as to what is within our power is one of the aids to a decision as to whether or not a particular impression is cognitive. This is essentially a judgement about the worth of certain things: whether they are good or evil or merely indifferent externals. The propositional form is one which says 'Ψ is a matter of importance to me'. Epictetus

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[28] So Epictetus tells us:

> ' Impressions happen to us in four ways: either things are, and so seem to be, or they are not and do not seem to be, or they are and do not seem to be, or are not, yet seem to be'(1.27.1).

So, of these four, only the first is cognitive, but the second is true, though incognitive. Epictetus tells us that making the right decision about this is the *ergon* of the 'educated man', that is to say the man making progress.

[29] The opening of *Ench.* 1 has the form of a *dihairesis* in Stoic logical terms (Diocles Magnus *ap.* DL 7.60)

assumes that if Ψ is something within the domain of the *prohairesis* then any impression with this propositional content will be cognitive; if Ψ is outwith the domain of the *prohairesis* then the impression will be incognitive[30].

The means by which the impression is to be tested to establish its cognitive value are by means of *canons* (*Ench.* 1.5). The early Stoics and their critics refer less to judging impressions by 'canons' or 'rules' than by a *criterion*[31]. It might be suggested that the examples cited here look more like *rules* that *criteria*, that is to say examples of established moral reasoning where principles have already been applied to situations in order to guide the unwise man[32]. However, Epictetus links *canons* very closely with one of Chrysippus' criteria, the preconception (2.11.18), which is also, it is clear, his own principal criterion (1.28.8), though not, of course for Chrysippus, whose principal criterion was the cognitive impression. It is in this light that Epictetus tells us that canons are *natural* (4.10.3), and 'god-given' (4.12.12), both terms which suggest, not so much rules which are the product of reasoning, but rather fundamental truths about the world and nature which have a more directly normative force. So it would seem that at 2.20.21, canons are the basis of the *development* of rules and that this is part of the 'task of the philosopher' which depends upon them (2.11.24). While not themselves criteria, perhaps, Epictetus' canons are clearly *natural* rather than logically-derived rules for thinking.

So in *Ench* 1, the *dihairesis* between what is within our power and outwith it is given as an example of the application of a canon. It contains an obvious truism: that everything can be categorised as being either within our outwith our power. This is then combined with a 'right way of looking at the world', whereby we observe that

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[30] cf. *Ench.* 45:

> 'Someone is bathing quickly. Do not say "badly", but "quickly". Someone is drinking a lot of wine; do not say "badly", but "a lot". Before you have discerned the judgement, whence shall you know that it is "badly"? Thus it will not happen to you that you receive cognitive impressions of one thing and assent to others."

[31] Diogenes Laërtius (7.41) seems to suggest that the terms may have been interchangeable for the earlier Stoics, but the context is not clear.

[32] so 2.11.19ff&24, and particularly 3.4.5 where the example of correct conduct in entering a theatre is referred to.

things cannot always be achieved as we want, and thus we have to shape our responses to impressions to take account of this fact.

Just as one has to take care in dealing with the immediately implausible impression, we need to take equal care with the immediately plausible, and apply the same strictures to it. So, for example, 'convincingness' is a quality of an impression which should be countered with our delaying assent and referring the matter to comparison with our preconceptions[33], that is to say we 'use' the impressions, both the incoming sensual impression and the mental impression derived from the securely installed concept.

Epictetus therefore warns against our being deceived by the 'suddenness' (or 'vividness', Oldfather), of an impression[34]:

> 'Setting these things[35] against it, you will overcome the impression, and not be dragged off by it. First of all do not be caught up by its suddenness, but say "Wait for me a little, impression; let me see what you are and concerning what; let me test you." And thereafter do not let it lead you away by depicting what will follow. Otherwise, it will go off taking you wherever it wishes. But rather bring in against it some other fine and noble impression and turn the filthy one out.'
>
> (2.18.23-5)

Here we gain a clearer idea of what Epictetus had in mind when he spoke of 'canons' for the testing of impressions. The criterion in this case is not related to any discernible quality in the impression itself, but rather to its propositional content, and specifically to the comparison of that content with what is already established as a sound and cognitive impression (such as one derived from a preconception). The reference to 'what will follow' is particularly important, as Epictetus emphasises elsewhere:

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[33] 1.27.6; cf 1.28.28, where Epictetus describes the preconceptions as *criteria*.

[34] We are even told of the possibility that we might receive a cognitive impression, and yet assent to an incognitive one (*Ench.* 45, cf. Plutarch. *St.Rep.* 1056ef.)

[35] The judgement that externals are not to be considered of any great value. (2.18.19-22).

> 'Whenever, you receive an impression of some pleasure, as with all other impressions, guard yourself, lest you are carried away by it. Rather, let the matter wait for *you*, and take some delay for yourself. Next dwell upon both periods of time, that during to which you will 'enjoy' the pleasure, and that during which, having enjoyed it, you will change your mind and curse yourself; against these things set the way in which you will enjoy refraining and praise yourself for it. If it seems the appropriate time to take on the deed, take care that its attractiveness and sweetness and enticement do not overcome you; but rather set against this how much better is the consciousness of yourself having won a victory over it.[36]

Here it is clear that the consequences of assenting to an impression are essential to the process of 'using' it by 'testing and waiting'. Essentially what are being compared are sensual and mental well-being: indifferent and good. The impression presents as a good what is merely an indifferent: physical pleasure. While we may have some tenuous control over the pleasure, subject to divine providence, it is not 'within our power' in the sense in which we have seen Epictetus to use the term, and so we may be disappointed in it; and then having made the judgement that it was a good we shall feel the resulting mental pain which is caused by the installation of a false judgement in the *prohairesis*. Thus another of the 'canons' is the state of the *prohairesis* as an aim[37]: our consciousness of what the disposition of our soul is, and likewise ought to be, is one of the factors which we must take into consideration in deciding how to 'use' an impression:

> 'So you also, gentlemen, first of all heal your wounds, stop your fluxes, be calm in your mind; bring it into the school undistracted. Then you will see what power reason has.' (2.21.22)

'Use of impressions', therefore, is not simply concerned with fresh external impressions, rather it is also concerned with those impressions which are already

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[36] *Ench.* 34. cf. also 2.11.13ff for subjecting a pleasure to a canon by examining its qualities.

[37] For which the preconception of the good will assist us in countering the incognitive impression.

installed in the *hêgemonikon*. Not only are they a storehouse of impressions which we must be prepared to bring forward for comparative purposes in order to stifle threatening new impressions, but they are themselves the object of use. 'Use of impressions' is part of the process of *prokopê*: we seek by means of it to establish the impressions in place which themselves will contribute to the state of our disposition. Hence we see the significance of the emphasis which Epictetus placed on not expecting 'security' from an impression to which we have not yet assented. The allusion to *asphaleia* is significant. Epictetus tells us, of the *topos* of assent:

> 'The third applies only to those who are already making some progress, and it concerns stability in these matters (duty and the maintenance of relations), so that even when in dreams an impression cannot overcome them untested, or when drunk, or mentally ill.' (3.2.5)

5.2.6 So, as we observed at the beginning of this section, part of what it means to 'progress', is that, as our soul acquires greater dispositional stability, it acquires greater assurance in its ability to assent to impressions. Correspondingly, we discover that the 'faculties' of the uneducated man (who has not made progress) are not '*asphaleis*' (1.8 title). So to use impressions properly, that is to say to assent properly, strengthens the soul's disposition so that we may assent properly again. Thus, it seems, that to 'test' an impression, and thereby respond to it in an appropriate way, is to 'make a judgement' (2.19.6&14).

The man who is making progress can reach a stage of development such that, even when temporarily not in possession of his fullest wits, he can still deal with an impression in such a way as not to accept it untested. One of the most significant factors, therefore, is the state of the *prohairesis*. The interesting aspect is that it is not simply the dispositional state of the soul as a quality of tension (*eutonia*) which is significant, but also the related propositional content of the relevant impressions. So, not only do we require to be 'calm in our minds', but we need to bring in the good impression to battle against the base one. The 'moral' import of our 'mental' activity, then, is summed up by Epictetus as 'using impressions and preconceptions' in a particular way (4.10.15). At all times, the resistance to the incognitive impression is

itself a cognitive activity, and the state of the *prohairesis* as a disposition is dependent upon the soundness of the impressions which are incorporated into it. Epictetus uses 'use of impressions' as a means of defining our mental activity as a whole: not simply assent, but everything else which is involved in making the decision to assent, including such things as here made the *prohairesis* disposed in a particular way in the past, and the comparisons which we make with previously assented impressions, and concepts or preconceptions. In the next chapter, we shall investigate how 'use of impressions' plays a rôle in how Epictetus accounts for the development of concepts and preconceptions and why he chooses to emphasise this criterion in particular.

5.3.1 We have seen, in our discussion of 'use of impressions' in Epictetus, that one of the principal considerations in the judicious use of impressions, and in the exercise of assent and refusal of assent or suspension of judgement is the comparison of incoming impressions with those which are, in some sense 'stored' in the *hêgemonikon.* This is an idea which finds considerable echo in the earlier Stoics. We are told by Plutarch that we have conceptions (*ennoiai*) which are a kind of 'thoughts laid aside in storage' (*Comm. Not.* 1084f). Concept development derives from the fact that our perceptions come not only from the senses, but some are also of a 'mental' kind. Sensory impressions can be retained in the mind, and when combined with new perceptions, can result in a new kind of impression which arises from these comparisons or combinations: embryonic ideas. As these ideas become more sophisticated, they become 'conceptions'.

These 'conceptions' are themselves impressions[38] and they can be called into play to support mental processes which enable us to develop more sophisticated responses to things than the simple reception of external objects[39]. Some of these conceptions, it seems are naturally acquired: we are in some way predisposed to develop them. The Stoics call these 'natural conceptions' or 'preconceptions' (*prolêpseis,* DL 7.84), and, it seems, the Stoics used their existence to justify their claim that their philosophical system was 'according to nature', since it itself was consistent with these preconceptions (Plutarch *Comm. Not.* 1060a).

Epictetus had a high view of the preconceptions — emphasising that they never disagree among themselves, but only in the way in which we apply them (4.1.44). The question, however, is how these standing judgements and preconceptions come about. This question takes us further into the realms of the Stoic epistemology and how it relates to their psychology. What is it that enables us to say that a judgement is true or false, or that it is based on an impression which is true or false? How do

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[38] Plutarch *ibid.*

[39] cf. DL 7.53, where various processes are described whereby we derive, as it were 'intelligible' qualities from perception of objects, by means of comparison and analogy between different objects of perception. According to Cicero (*Acad.* 2.21) these techniques are used to create conceptions, which then in turn are the basis of further 'mental' perceptions.

we store such true impressions and judgements in such a way that we can draw upon them to make decisions about further impressions in the future? It is this question which we shall seek to answer in the remainder of this chapter. We shall outline the evidence for the Stoic doctrine of cognition and the formation of concepts based on it and compare this with the account which we have in Epictetus. In the final section, we shall look at the use of preconceptions as a criterion of truth in Stoicism and consider whether, as seems to be the case, at least at a superficial level, Epictetus increases its relative importance to other criteria, such as the cognitive impression. In particular, we shall wish to consider this issue in the light of the views of Epictetus and the earlier Stoics on the passions, since, according to the Stoics, a passion is an 'opinion' (Stobaeus 2.88.22-89.3 = *SVF* 3.378), and their account of dealing with the passions, and seeking to eliminate them, is largely a matter of a cognitive therapy.

5.3.2 Concept formation, in the Stoic account, begins with the impression:

> 'The Stoics agree to put the account which concerns the impression and perception in the first place, inasmuch as the criterion, by which the truth of matters is discerned, is an impression according to genus, and inasmuch as the explanation of assent and cognition and reasoning, which goes before the others, is not constituted without impression. Impression comes first, then the mind, which has the power of expression, sets out in words that which it receives (*paschei*) from the impression.' (DL 7.49)

The *hêgemonikon* at birth was a *tabula rasa* in respect of cognitive information, and had no conceptual material within it. This material, when it developed in due course, was dependent in the first place upon the information which it received from the senses ([Aëtius] 4.11.1-4 = *SVF.* 2.83) — although, as we shall see, as reason developed, 'mental' impressions contributed to further development. An impression, as the Stoics insisted, required a change in the *hêgemonikon*, a *pathos* (4.12.2 = *SVF.* 2.54), *typôsis* or *alloiôsis*: in other words, an alteration of its disposition. This change was called, by Zeno, a *typôsis*, signifying an impression in a literal sense, which was, according to the sources, to be imagined like the impression on wax of a seal (DL 7.50). Clearly, by this description, Zeno intended to convey that

the impression conveyed accurately the image of the object of sense which was the cause of the impression (*ibid.*, cf. also Sextus *M.* 7.250). It was thought important to stress that the impression 'revealed itself and its cause' ([Aëtius] 4.12.1ff. = *SVF.* 2.54), and that the cause was the thing which was the object of perception. Without this claim the Stoic epistemology, as we shall see, would have had little coherence as a system. However, the Stoics' early critics seem to have attacked the literal idea of impression, not so much on the grounds of the idea of impression itself, but rather that the conception of the soul as being like a lump of wax did not seem to allow for the storage of impressions in such a way that they remained available (DL *ibid.*). Chrysippus, therefore, is credited with having introduced the idea of the impression as an *alloiôsis (ibid.*), or *heteroiôsis*, which, it was claimed, would account for the ability of the soul to retain impressions in the presence of others[40].

5.3.3 'Assent' (*synkatathesis*) is as central to the epistemology of the Stoics as the impression itself[41]. 'Assent' is the basis, not only of belief, but of action (since it is necessary to impulse in rational animals), of cognition and knowledge (Cicero *Acad.* 2.145), and thereby also of skills, sciences and virtue. Assent, is a kind of 'yielding' (*eixis*) to an impression (and to its propositional content; DL 7.51; Plutarch *St. Rep.* 1056ef) which causes it to be 'incorporated' into the disposition of the *hêgemonikon*, a change which is more fundamental and long-lasting than that which is brought about by impressions alone[42]. The assent then becomes the basis of the ability of the soul to respond to impressions on the basis of previous ones; it appears that the

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[40] cf. Sextus *M.* 7.237: Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, I p.91

[41] Cicero, *Acad.* 2.37-8; it is essential, for example, to memory; cf. Sorabji *Animal Minds* p.52.

[42] So Sextus tells us that 'others', (presumably later Stoics) concluded that the *heteroiôsis* brought about by assent was different from the one which was brought about by the mere reception of the impression. The change brought about by the impression was a disposition, but 'passive', whereas that which took place with assent was an 'activity': it was a long-lasting disposition which was capable of precipitating other changes by the way in which it altered the disposition of the soul. Galen tells us (*PHP.* 5.3 = *SVF.* 2.841) that concepts and preconceptions are 'activities' of this kind.

impressions of the expert are actually different from those of the layman (DL 7.51). This is a subtle and important point: the impression is not just what we perceive, but *how* — the great 'how' which is the secret of so much Stoic doctrine — what information the impression conveys to us depends to some extent upon what we already have. Thus impressions, when assented to, have a lasting effect upon the disposition of the individual; we are told that Chrysippus defined skill, or expertise (*technê*), as a disposition (*hexis)* which developed from repeated impressions[43]. So it is this disposition which informs the experts's reception of the impression and enables him to derive more from it than the layman. So Cicero tells us that skills operate as 'second senses' (*Acad.* 2.31).

The significant assent for the development of concepts is the 'cognition', which is the assent to the cognitive impression (DL 7.46; Cicero *Acad.*, 1.40-1). We should observe the position of cognition between 'opinion' and knowledge. Opinion, it seems, is a 'weak' or 'false' assent, whereas 'knowledge', as we know, is a disposition of the *hêgemonikon* which corresponds to virtue. In what sense, then, can cognition be said to come 'in between' these two states? It seems clear from the testimony that cognitions are the building blocks of the conceptual development whose result is knowledge[44]. The infant mind, as it develops, has the natural ability, through *oikeiôsis* to select cognitions of similar import to form 'concepts' (*ennoiai*) which are themselves the source of 'mental' impressions. A passage in [Aëtius] (4.11.1-4 = *SVF.* 2.83) suggests that the development proceeds from the assent to the impression on a single occasion, which leaves a memory[45], to a number of similar memories, which, taken collectively, constitute 'experience'[46]. 'Concepts', it seems, are a sub-

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[43] Olympiodorus *On Plato's Gorgias* 12.1 = Long and Sedley 42A. I cite the latter collection, since Von Arnim rejects the Chrysippus fragment in this text. The Zeno fragment, which Von Arnim accepts (2.73) we shall consider in due course.

[44] or virtue (Cicero. *Acad.* 2.31)

[45] Memories, it seems are 'continuing and dispositional (*schetikai*) impressions' (Plut. *Comm.not.* 1085a)

[46] cf. Gould *The Philosophy of Chrysippus* p 59:

> 'Therefore, Chrysippus probably assumed memory to function by collecting together in groups or families those presentations or

class of experience, and 'preconceptions' a sub-class of concepts[47].

It is these 'preconceptions' or common conceptions which stimulate the development of the young mind[48], by providing us by their early and natural development with the basis upon which we can deal with further impressions and develop further concepts. Thus, by the observation, on a number of occasions, of white objects, and the cognitive assent to their having this quality, the mind somehow groups together the cognitions which have resulted from this observation into the 'concept' of 'white'[49]. This then informs further deliberation about the colour white and white objects[50]. 'Reason' is 'composed' of preconceptions ([Aëtius, *ibid.*), a statement which is paralleled in Epictetus by his insistence that reason is composed of a 'certain kind of impressions', that is to say cognitive impressions. Likewise we are told that cognitions are required to make up the skills which themselves constitute parts of knowledge[51]. It is in the nature, then, of the cognition, that it contributes to

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impressions of existing objects which are similar to one another.'

So, as Gould correctly points out, it is the *objects* which are similar, and from observing them, we naturally extrapolate the qualities which we perceive them to have in common.

[47] Their subject matter is 'universals' (DL 7.54) which presupposes that 'concepts' have a wider range of subjects.

[48] So Galen (*PHP.* 5.3 = *SVF.* 2.841) tells us that one of the definitions of 'reason' is that it is a 'combination' (*athroisma*) of certain conceptions and preconceptions. cf. Long (*Hellenistic Philosophy* p. 124) who suggests that the *capacity* to form concepts is innate, but that its realization requires experience.

[49] The mind places cognitions of things with like characteristics alongside one another in its memory and thereby abstracts the characteristic which it perceives them all to have (Cic. *Acad.* 2.30). Diogenes Laërtius (7.53) discusses at length the various methods which the mind has at its disposal for abstracting these characteristics: 'direct contact', 'similarity', 'analogy', 'transposition', 'synthesis' and 'contrariety'.

[50] Sextus suggests (ironically) that the Stoics regarded concepts and preconceptions as the prerequisite of any theoretical inquiry (*M.* 7.331a).

[51] cf. Olympiodorus *On Plato's Gorgias* 12.1 = *SVF.* 1.73, where we find *technê* defined by Zeno as a 'system of cognitions which are brought together towards some end which is useful in life'. The 'system' of cognitions is also, as we have seen, a definition of Reason, and would seem, therefore to be a standard definition of mental dispositions which develop from cognitions.

the development of mental dispositions which we then draw upon in the pursuit of further mental and sensory activity[52].

5.3.4 What does it mean, then, to say that cognition comes *between* opinion and knowledge? Since all these phenomena are assents, they must all be changes in the disposition of the *hêgemonikon.* As Long and Sedley point out in their commentary on Cicero's *Academica* 2.22, scientific knowledge differs from mere expertise inasmuch as the former is an invariable *diathesis* and the latter a variable *hexis*[53]. This is the Stoic response to the attack of Arcesilaus which is reported by Sextus (*M.* 7.150ff). Arcesilaus is trying to discredit cognition as a criterion of truth, by undermining the Stoic view that it is shared by the wise man who has knowledge and the fool who has opinion. If the wise man assents to an impression, according to Arcesilaus, surely by nature of the stability of his mind it is knowledge, and in the case of the fool, by virtue of his instability, it is opinion. The Stoic response, however, must be that the mind of the unwise man consists of both cognitions and opinions. However, due to the unstable mixture, which is the *hexis*, the cognitions which the unwise man has, do not have the systematic coherence to form knowledge. Once the unwise man can replace all his 'opinions' with 'cognitions', then this systematic coherence will take over, and his 'cognitions' will be transformed into 'pieces of knowledge' (*epistêmai*), just as his mind as a whole will now be disposed according to knowledge (*epistêmê*).

In other words, the kind of concept development that leads to knowledge can only arise from cognitions:

> 'For if there were false concepts (since you seem to be calling *ennoiai notitiae*), if therefore there were these concepts which are

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[52] Hence one of the features of 'skills' and other dispositional groups is that they act as 'second senses'

[53] *Hellenistic Philosophers* 1.263-4:

> 'One doctor can be more expert than another; but one virtuous man cannot be more virtuous than another, since virtue, being scientific knowledge, is a state of intellectual perfection.'

Cicero (*Acad.* 2.145) points out that knowledge is available only to the wise man. (cf. *M.* 7.152).

> either false, or impressed on the mind by impressions in such a way that they could not be distinguished from false ones, in what way could we use them? In what way could we see what is consistent with any matter, or inconsistent? Certainly there would be no place at all left for memory which embraces not only philosophy, but also every manner of life and all arts in one? For what memory can there be of false things; or what can anyone remember that he does not grasp or hold in his mind?' (*Academica* 2.22)

In order to develop systematic dispositional groups of impressions, we require cognitions to be their building-blocks. Opinion is by nature a fleeting thing, since assent to the false impression does not lead to any kind of stable thinking. Likewise 'weak assent' to a cognitive impression, results in 'suppositions' (Stobaeus 2.112.4), but these lack conviction, and the implication is that they are by nature unsystematic. Furthermore, they are capable of 'declaring a false thing'. Assent to the cognitive impression does lead to stability, however (Stobaeus 2.112.12). It leads to dispositions which, contrary to the argument of Arcesilaus, are available to the unwise man. Being those of the unwise man, they are '*hexeis*': dispositions which are subject to variation — those of the wise man being *diatheseis*. In this way, then, cognition stands between opinion and knowledge. The unwise man's natural tendency is to opinion; cognition, however, opens up to him the possibility of forming the kind of dispositions which are formed in the same way as the knowledge of the wise man, and what is equally significant, can be improved so that they come closer and closer to the stable disposition of true knowledge. This demonstrates that, although the cognitive impression has the power to attract us, our reaction is not guaranteed. Although Sextus and Arcesilaus are wrong to suggest that all the unwise man's cognitions are opinions, it remains the case that one can assent 'weakly' to a cognitive impression (Stobaeus 2.112.4): that is to say, one which has all the features of the cognitive impression, save the state of mind of the individual who perceives it. The essence of cognition is our 'grasp' upon it (Cicero *Academica* 1.41), and if our dispositions are weak, we are less likely to do so on every occasion. Cognition itself is the key to our progress, just as 'right use of impressions' in Epictetus.

There is a close connection between assent to the incognitive impression as

being 'weak' and 'false' (Cicero, *Academica* 1.41-2). If one assents to something incognitive, it may be either one or the other: false because it is untrue or incomplete, and weak, because it will not stand up to the scrutiny of being contradicted: it will not be incorporated into the disposition of the *hêgemonikon* in a way which will remain[54]. Knowledge, on the other hand, is 'unshakeable by reason' (Cicero *Academica* 1.41-2). We cannot rely on opinion as the basis for helping us to assess future impressions. This becomes significant when we come to look at how Epictetus looks at his own notion of a *dogma*. As we have already discussed in previous chapters, Epictetus seems to speak of a judgement, whether true or false, having the power to be permanently impressed on the *hêgemonikon*.

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[54] It is by nature 'changeable' (Stobaeus 2.111.18-112.8)

5.4.1 We observed that in the early Stoic tradition, concept formation began with the impression, and with the cognitive impression in particular. 'Cognitions', the assents to such impressions, became the building-blocks of concepts and related dispositional groups. Thus, one of the definitions of 'reason' is that it is a 'system' of cognitions and concepts, a definition which draws attention not only to the importance of the changes brought about by the assent to a cognitive impression in actually creating dispositions, but also of sorting them according to their content. Likewise, Epictetus defines reason as a 'system of a certain kind of impressions', which is to say, as seems almost certain, those that are cognitive. Thus the most fundamental principle of the Stoic epistemology is in place in Epictetus. He also agrees that one of the important features of the cognitive impression is that it is clear (cf. *Ench.* 45; 3.8.4; 4.4.13) and 'assent' is one of the most prominent features of his epistemology; although he makes more of 'use of impressions' as an generic expression, it is clear that assent is the most important of those things which are subsumed under the general heading[55].

The way in which we 'use impressions' to combine them is illustrated by Epictetus in a passage of great significance and considerable conciseness:

> 'But you have the power to ponder the divine dispensation and each of the divine matters at the same time as human, and at one time be moved in the senses by tens of thousands of things, and at the same time in the mind; at the same time being moved in an 'assenting' way by some things, and a 'refusing assent' way by others and a 'suspending judgement' way with regard to others yet; and you guard in your soul so many impressions (*typous*) of many and varied objects, and moved by them you fall into mental images of the same form as those which impressed you in the first place, and thus you preserve skills and memories, one on top of another, derived from tens of thousands of objects.' (1.14.7-8)

Here we have a detailed account of our natural cognitive ability which stands

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[55] It is, of course, the subject matter of what Epictetus calls the third 'topos' of philosophy, and the key to understanding it is discerning between cognitive and incognitive impressions. (cf. especially 4.4.13).

comparison with that anywhere in the Stoic testimony for conciseness and clarity. This passage sums up Epictetus' commitment to the Stoic account of concept-formation in several ways.

In the first place, we find the assertion that the mind can be moved both in the senses and mentally. Epictetus thus adds his own weight to the earlier Stoic insistence that impressions can arise from mental processes, and from storage in the mind, as well as from immediate experience of the senses (Cicero *Academica* 2.20). This, as we saw, is the fundamental principle upon which the Stoic concept-formation was based. Secondly, this movement can result in assent or either refusal of assent or suspension of judgement. Both the 'aesthetic' and the 'mental' impressions contribute to this activity, a fact which is underlined when the mind's ability to keep hold of more than one impression at one time, which is of the essence of both the comparison of impressions as a prerequisite of careful assent, and of the formation of concepts is asserted[56].

In the second half of this brief passage, we find that mental images are of the same form as the sensual images which first brought them about. This is a key idea in any attempt to make use of mental impressions: the stored impression has to be such that it can be used again for comparative purposes. Last of all, we find the significant reference to memories and skills. These, as we saw in our discussion of the Earlier Stoics are important features of their account of concept-formation. Memory, as we saw, is the next stage after cognition in the development of any kind of cognitive disposition, whether it be a piece of technical knowledge or a more abstract concept: it is the mind's basic ability to recall impressions to which it has assented in the past which enable it to make the kind of abstractions which bring about conceptual groups ([Aëtius 4.11.1-4 = *SVF.* 2.83).

Thus, as we saw in our discussion of 'faculty', Epictetus imagines 'use of impressions' to have a reciprocal relationship with such dispositional groups as 'skills' and 'faculties'. They are developed by 'use of impressions' from impressions, and then provide material for the use of further impressions. They are thus 'subject' to the control of the 'faculty which makes use of impressions' or overall rational disposition

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[56] cf Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action* p.84.

of the *hêgemonikon*, of which they are part (2.23.5-7). Thus we, as rational beings, by controlling the assents which we make, also control the systematic way in which they are combined in our overall disposition, which is essential for Epictetus' view of the *unity* of the self as *prohairesis*.

> Is it the case, then, that impressions require to be assented to before they can make a substantial change? We observed that [Aëtius] described an impression as generically a *pathos*, a description which implies one that has not been assented to, since assent is something which is essentially within our power. Epictetus also uses this designation in a number of places. We are warned against attempts to build *eutonia* or *asphaleia* on them (2.15.8). In other words, such impressions are inappropriate for this purpose, and we must examine an impression until sure of its potential to be assented to before it can be used as the basis of any serious dispositional group of information, such as a faculty or skill.

5.4.2 What is strikingly absent, however, from Epictetus' account of conceptions and preconceptions is the term 'cognition' (*katalêpsis*). Assent to the cognitive impression is accepted, but cognition itself does not seem to be important to Epictetus. The term itself only appears twice. Both of these passages (4.4.13; *Fr.* 1) are concerned with the impossibility of cognizing impressions which are obviously counterfactual, and which are such that one cannot have a 'feeling' that they are the case, and cannot therefore assent without investigation. What we do not find is the idea that cognitions are the building-blocks of cognitive dispositional groups, such as skills, concepts and preconceptions[57]. Sextus Empiricus (*M.* 8.331a-332a) makes the claim that there are differences in preconceptions, asserting that the Stoics were wrong to take the opposite view. Epictetus, on the other hand retains very clearly the early Stoic idea that *preconceptions* are correct in themselves. They are common to all people, he insists, and we conflict only in the application of them (1.22.1ff; 4.1.44). If we have wrong opinions, we cannot be using the preconceptions properly (2.11.11).

In the early Stoic account, it was the nature of cognition as an assent which

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[57] So, in Cic. *Acad.* 2.30-1, we find that the mind uses cognitions to construct the sciences.

grasped the truth which guaranteed the stability of the assent, thereby ensuring that the content of the dispositional groups was accurate. Only impressions which were cognitive and which were properly assented to were able to make up such groups. False or otherwise incognitive impressions, when assented to, were 'opinions', which had no such stability.

5.4.3 However, as well as 'use of impressions' we find another generic term which is of considerable significance to Epictetus, the judgement, or *dogma*. Its etymological connection with *dokeo* might seem to suggest that it is equivalent to *doxa*, which in the early Stoics is weak assent or assent to the incognitive. *Dogma* is not a term which they make much use of, and attempts to define it seem to appear only in late sources. Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 8.5 = *SVF.* 2.121) tells us that it is a 'rational cognition', and connects it, with *hairesis*. Stobaeus is even more helpful. He tells us that the 'health of the soul', is a 'good mixture' (*eukrasia*) of the judgements in the soul (2.62.23-4), and furthermore that the 'strength of the soul' is a 'sufficient tension in judging our acting or not, as the case may be' (2.62.25-63.1). The Clement account is a little garbled insofar as one cannot imagine a Stoic assenting to the idea of an 'irrational' cognition but it does seem to suggest that later Stoics thought that the *dogma* could have some of the features of a cognition, which would distinguish it sharply from an 'opinion'. Likewise the comment of Stobaeus makes it clear that judgements contribute to a strong psychic disposition, something which is quite the antithesis of *doxa*.

Epictetus, as we have noted, makes a close connection between 'judgements', taken collectively, and the *prohairesis* (1.17.26). It is they which, it seems, constitute that disposition, or at least bring about the alterations to it which we make by our use of impressions. Thus, since the *prohairesis* is capable of stability, and even of such a state of stability that it becomes wisdom, the good, it is clear that 'judgements' cannot be simply opinions or weak assents. This is further exemplified by Epictetus' contention that at least one of the processes which might lead to 'forming a judgement' is the use of an impression by 'testing' it (1.19.6). So it becomes clear that, whatever a judgement may be, it does not always come about as a result of the unreflective assent to an untested impression, and cannot be simply equated with the

'opinion' of the earlier Stoics. Neither can it be simply equated with 'cognition', as is revealed by Epictetus in another important passage:

> 'If judgements are the cause of everything, and a man has base judgements, whatever the cause is like, such is the outcome. But do we all have sound judgements, both you and he who goes to law against you? And why do you disagree? Do you have sound judgements, then, rather than he? Why? It appears so to you. So it appears to him and to the mad. That's a terrible criterion. But show me that you have made an investigation and particular concern for your judgements.' (3.9.4-6)

Epictetus thus refers to the classic Stoic account of the assents of the mad as being of no less cognitive value than the 'opinions' of the sane. The untested assent to an impression whose cognitive value we have no sure knowledge of is no real help to making any kind of decision about one's appropriate response to a situation. It is, as Epictetus says, a terrible criterion. Some judgements, therefore, are not 'cognitive' in the sense of being of use as a criterion of truth. The establishment of the judgements which would have this quality comes about by the 'use of impressions', by investigation of the judgements, and the making of 'second-order' judgements about them in order to test their soundness and usefulness as criteria. In other words, by 'using impressions' in investigating the judgements, we thereby establish their usefulness as a criterion for 'use' of incoming impressions. The necessity of investigating judgements, however, illustrates that they differ in a fundamental way from the 'cognitions' of the earlier Stoics; whereas cognitions were necessarily assents to cognitive impressions which provided a true grasp upon reality, it seems that 'judgements' can have either a stable cognitive status, or a non-cognitive status which superficially resembles the early Stoic notion of 'opinion', but perhaps has greater permanence.

5.4.5 There are two features of the way in which Epictetus seems to talk about judgements which seem to suggest that Epictetus is seeking to emphasise the fact that assents to incognitive impressions created lasting mental states which had a kind of 'strength': not the kind of strength which a cognition has, that it is 'unassailable by reason', but potentially at least as permanent in duration. The first is what we have

just observed: the use of good and bad *dogmata* as being corresponding assents. In Stoic terms one simply cannot have a good *doxa* and the emphasis in defining an opinion is upon its weakness and instability.

But it is equally clear that the judgements affect the state of the *prohairesis*, whether good or bad. Thus the long-term effect is of the essence of the judgement. This is illustrated by Epictetus' insistence that stronger judgements overcome the poorer (1.29.19), a clear reference to the tensional quality of the resulting dispositions: the better the judgement, the stronger the tension, but this implies that there is a *continuum* on which the quality of judgements can be established.

This is confirmed by Epictetus' suggestion that *hypolêpsis* can be either good or bad (2.9.14). This is the term which is used in the earlier Stoa for the 'supposition' which is the weak assent to an impression which might be otherwise cognitive were it not for the state of the perceiver's mind (Stobaeus 2.112.4 = *SVF.* 3.548). Here, however, we find that we are told to make good suppositions 'effective' (*chrêstikai*). This term would seem to imply that such a supposition should be improved in status in such a way as would make it able to be used for other purposes: in other words to make them judgements or cognitions[58]. So Epictetus speaks of the judgement which has real strength to influence our behaviour, which 'cries aloud' (4.9.139-40) as being '...not a cold and pathetic little supposition (*hypolêpseidion*), hanging from random arguments as from a hair, but strong and functional and 'initiated' through being trained through actions'. Thus, by the testing of a 'supposition' and submitting it to further consideration, we can establish its status as a proper judgement: assent to it and incorporate it into the disposition of the *hêgemonikon*. But it is clear that it can be either good or bad. The consequence of failing to do so is that we become merely the 'interpreters of others' judgements', as opposed to having judgments of one's own. Judgement, therefore, refers to the permanent, or semi-permanent installation of an assent into the *hêgemonikon*, whether it be good or bad.

In other words, Epictetus returns again to the notion of a continuum of mental

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[58] Both judgements and 'suppositions' are capable of becoming 'causes' (1.11.33).

states which we may pass through on the way to wisdom. Elsewhere we saw that this had led him to a new way of defining the end. Here we find what might be called the 'epistemological' aspect of this. Judgements may be good or bad. They are equally permanent (unless challenged and destroyed). However, as we shall see, Epictetus has an optimistic response to this. We can bring the good judgement into play. The next question which we must address is the identification of the source of our good judgments.

5.4.6 In contrast to the widespread reference to preconceptions in Epictetus, concepts (*ennoiai*) appear only on a few occasions, but to describe a wide variety of different mental constructs, for example, man (2.24.12) and freedom (4.1.24). At 3.13.2 we have a description of how a concept arises: in this case, the concept of 'being alone'. This begins from a 'natural thing', says Epictetus, the fact of community and the love which people have for one another. Thus, from the 'appropriation' which derives from our nature, we have an observable principle of behaviour. From this our minds extrapolate the absence of the advantages which this appropriation brings, which then allows the mind to construct the concept of 'being alone'. This, last stage corresponds to the development of the concept of being 'without hands', which is described for us by Diogenes Laërtius (7.53): having a concept of a man as having hands, we infer the concept of 'a man without hands' by 'deprivation'.

The distinction, as we observed, in the early Stoa, between concepts and preconceptions is that the latter came about 'naturally': that is to say that they are concerned with fundamental notions such as justice and the good, which are necessary to all human life, rather than technical matters which might only be relevant to one profession (DL 7.53). Epictetus seems to reflect the same distinction:

> 'Who said to you, Theopompus, that we do not have concepts of each of these things[59] which are natural and preconceptions? But we cannot adjust our preconceptions to the appropriate instances unless we have articulated them and considered this very point — what sort of particular is to be classified under each of them?' (2.17.7)

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[59] viz. 'the good' and 'the just'.

At the beginning of 2.11, this is explained in further detail. Abstract concepts whose nature could be inferred directly from things in the world, such as, for example, right-angled triangles, do not present themselves as 'natural' conceptions, but rather require instruction:

> 'But of good and evil, and the fine and the base and the appropriate and inappropriate and happiness and of the proper and what falls to us, and what we ought to do, who has come into life without having an innate conception?' (2.11.3)

So, the subject-matter of the 'natural' preconceptions deals with those things which are essential to the Stoic naturalist ethical system, but do not obviously arise from any investigation whose nature we can trace. The fact that everyone seems to have them, in one form or another, leads the Stoics to infer that they simply come into being 'naturally', as it were, through 'appropriation'. Epictetus accepts this account.

5.4.7 However, despite this insistence that preconceptions are naturally acquired, and the corresponding argument that they are of the same content for all and do not disagree among themselves[60], Epictetus nonetheless requires us to 'work at' our preconceptions (4.4.26). The explanation for this apparently strange suggestion seems to lie in the passage which we have quoted above, where Epictetus speaks of 'applying them to the appropriate instances' and 'setting them in order'. The latter of these, what Epictetus calls *diarthrôsis*, is referred to in a relatively vague way by Plutarch at the beginning of the *De Communibus Notitiis*[61] where we are told that Chrysippus protected the Stoic epistemology from Carneades' attack by 'articulating' the concepts and preconceptions and 'placing them in their appropriate place'[62].

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[60] The basis on which Epictetus will claim them as a 'criteria'(1.28.28).

[61] 1059c. Note that διαρθρώσας is an emendation by Wyttenbach, the MSS have διορθώσας.

[62] So also, we find that in the catalogue of Chrysippus' works found in Diogenes Laërtius, the first sub-division of Logic, is entitled *Of Ethical Reason, concerning the articulation of ethical conceptions* (7.199). This section includes treatises on defining the good or bad man, and on logical divisions (*diaireseis*).

Chrysippus is credited with having understood what each of our concepts and preconceptions is, when considered as an individual cognitive disposition with a particular subject-matter, and to 'place' each of these, that is to say, to establish their respective relation and importance according to subject matter[63].

It would seem that it is this achievement of Chrysippus which Epictetus urges upon each of us individually. We are required to 'look in upon ourselves to see what preconceptions we have'. 'Articulation' is a matter of rational self-contemplation, as Epictetus explains:

> 'Since it is reason which articulates and works through to the end the rest of things, and since it itself ought not to be unarticulated, by what shall it be articulated? It is clear that it should be by itself or by something else. Either it is reason itself or something is greater than reason, which is impossible.' (1.17.1-2)

Epictetus goes on to emphasise the importance of logical reasoning to establish standards by which appropriate matters may be judged[64]. Reason is the one self-cognitive and self-assessing faculty, as Epictetus asserts elsewhere. Reason, of course, includes the preconceptions (being composed of them), and therefore they are included among those things which are to be articulated and systematised[65]. 'Articulation', therefore, is part of the self-contemplation of reason and the *prohairesis* which is the prerequisite of 'progress'[66]. By contemplating our preconceptions and judging how they may be used, we contribute to our intellectual development. Thus, once again, we discover that the rational disposition 'uses impressions' to improve its own state

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[63] cf. Cherniss (Loeb ed.) *ad loc.* (pp.664-5):

> 'That is to say that he not only defined each severally but he produced an articulated classification in which each had its own place in relation to all the others.'

[64] So it is important to articulate preconceptions in order to establish the *canon* (2.11.17-18)

[65] So, for example, the preconception of 'freedom' is 'used' by the observation that a caged lion does not illustrate it (4.1.24ff.).

[66] So, we are to 'turn in upon ourselves' in order to 'learn our preconceptions'.

and the state of those faculties which are subject to it[67].

5.4.8 One aspect of this process of 'articulating' the preconceptions is the activity which Epictetus often refers to in connection with 'working at' the preconceptions: that of 'applying' the preconceptions to particular instances. So, for example, one aspect of 'articulation' is the examination of 'what follows' from a preconception; consideration as to whether or not any assertion can be logically derived from it (2.12.5&9). This, says Epictetus, is the principal source of disagreement among mankind, since preconceptions cannot, by definition, be false, or wrong. The application of preconceptions involves the categorising of a particular judgement under a particular preconception which then seems to contribute towards a further conceptual 'application'. So, for example, following on from the passage above (2.17.8-9) we find that the fact that various treatments might be prescribed for a particular ailment does not in any sense undermine the quality of the preconception of 'being healthy' but rather the appropriateness of its being applied in certain circumstances.

5.4.9 Epictetus uses this model to introduce the discussion of an area which he regards as of the greatest significance: the application of what one might call the 'moral' preconceptions. It is by this that we demonstrate that our preconceptions are properly 'articulated':

> 'Thus this is also the case here in matters relating to our way of life. For which of us does not babble about 'good' and 'evil' and 'advantageous' and 'disadvantageous'? Which of us does not have a preconception of each of these? But is it articulated and complete? Demonstrate this. "How shall I demonstrate it?" Apply it properly to the appropriate situations. Plato, for instance, subsumed definitions under the preconception of "the useful", but you, under the "useless". Is it possible that both of you should have hit the mark? How is it possible? Does not one man apply the preconception of the good to the

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[67] So, for example, someone who 'uses' their preconceptions properly will not be wrongly disposed towards God (4.10.15).

> instance of wealth, and another not? And another to pleasure, and another yet to wealth? Altogether, if all of us who babble names do not understand them emptily and do not need any care for the articulation of preconceptions, why do we disagree, why do we battle, why blame one another?' (2.17.10-13)

'Articulation' is required in order to bring about the 'completeness' of the preconception. The preconception, like all preconceptions, requires to be made up from assents to appropriate impressions. However, that does not rule out the possibility that the mind may also make judgements of the opposite kind under the wrong influences. The mind has to learn to distinguish between the preconceptions and other judgements, by rationally articulating the preconception: that is to say, as we have observed above, applying the reason to it to investigate it and to understand its place within the rational system. Although preconceptions are something which develop naturally in us as children, if we are to use them rationally, as part of the cogitations of the *mature* soul, they have to be 'articulated'. This unaccomplished, the preconception may not have the full requisite force as a criterion for further judgement. The articulated preconception, however, is 'complete'.

It is application which tests this completeness and articulation. Someone whose preconception of the good is incomplete, in this sense of being unarticulated, might falsely subsume some preferred indifferent, such as wealth or pleasure under it. This does not affect the preconception itself, but it will affect our judgements about the preconception: judgments which, having the same subject matter, will supply impressions which compete with the preconception in our memory when subsequent inquiry is made on the same subject. It is for this reason, them, that Epictetus can reconcile his insistence on the absolute accuracy of the preconception *taken as a preconception* and his requirement that we 'purify' our preconceptions (1.27.6), just as we purify our judgments and *prohairesis*. We need to clear them of the false judgments which surround them, and which prevent them from being applied properly. So, receiving the impression that death is an evil, we have to have at hand the impressions from the preconception of evil, that it is a thing to be avoided, and from that of death, that it cannot be avoided. Seeing that the same thing cannot follow from the same preconceptions, we then refuse the impression that death is an evil.

5.5.1 As we observed in our discussion of 'use of impressions' and assent, both the early Stoic tradition and Epictetus make the claim that preconceptions are a 'criterion' (1.28.8; cf. DL 7.54), that is to say, a criterion of truth: a standard for judging the truth of any impression. In both cases, we must infer, they lie alongside the criterion of the cognitive impression. There are two features which the Stoics attribute to the preconception which one would expect to be necessary in guaranteeing their effectiveness as a criterion: first that the preconception develops naturally, and is therefore universal and common to all, and thus it is a source, to which everyone has access, of cognitive mental impressions. Secondly, the comparison of impressions is central to proper assent (DL 7.53), a doctrine given particular emphasis by Epictetus. So, with a secure impression available with which to compare incoming impressions, we have the basis of proper assent in such areas as are covered by preconceptions. Diogenes Laërtius (7.54) is thus unfair in his accusation that Chrysippus contradicts himself when he asserts that perception and preconception are criteria as well as advocating the cognitive impression.

5.5.2 The emphasis on the use of preconceptions among the early Stoics is largely upon the placing of one impression against another, and the use of preconceptions in 'scientific', or logical investigations (Sextus *ibid.*). Epictetus, on the other hand, places far more emphasis on the *application* of preconceptions in deciding the appropriate response to, as it were, 'ethical' questions — given that we have a preconception of 'good' and 'bad', how can we identify a particular thing or course of action as 'good' or 'bad'[68]?

So, for example, preconceptions are to be used in connection with the most commonly cited of what Epictetus calls 'canons', that is whether or not a matter is within or outwith our power. We have preconceptions of the 'good' and 'evil'. Considering these further and articulating them, we shall discover that they deal with those things which are within our power and have nothing to do with things which are

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[68] So, for example, at 1.22.5ff. we find Achilles and Agamemnon agreed in the pursuit of the *kalon* as the aim, but disagreeing as to what constitutes it in the particular circumstances. Thus there is a preconception of 'the fine' which includes the subsidiary notion that it is to be pursued.

outwith our power. This, then corresponds exactly to the analysis of the 'essence' of good which we find in II 8, where it is found to be a disposition of the soul[69], and to be chiefly exercised in the 'understanding in the use of impressions', which is the essential nature of man in his kinship with God and the basis of his free action. Our preconception, therefore, of good, must necessarily conform to this definition: by analysing an impression to see whether its subject-matter can fall into this category, enables us to decide whether or not it can be articulated along with the preconception of good or evil:

> 'What, then, is it to become educated? It is to learn how to apply the natural preconceptions to specific cases correspondingly, by nature, and furthermore, to distinguish them, inasmuch as of things which exist, some are within our power, and others not within our power. Within our power are *prohairesis*, and all the tasks within the domain of the *prohairesis*, outwith our power are the body, the parts of the body, possessions, parents, brothers, children, country, and all our associations. Where, then, shall we place the good? To what 'case' shall we apply it? To that which is within our power...? (1.22.9-12)

The state of the *prohairesis* is the key to the usefulness of preconceptions. As we observed, from the passage cited above the application of the 'canon' of a matter's being within or outwith our power as a means of deciding its applicability to the preconception of the good, is the means of making progress, of improving our disposition, and of 'becoming educated'. The 'cleansing' of the preconceptions is a feature which is referred to by Epictetus (1.27.6). Cleansing is a process which we have already associated with the *hêgemonikon* and *prohairesis*. Their purification was a matter of the cognitive improvement of the disposition of the *hêgemonikon* by the 'use of impressions': the making of judgements which were more and more in accordance with nature. It was a self-reflective activity which consisted in the 'incorporation' of good assents at the expense of poor ones[70].

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[69] ibid.2: *nous*, knowledge and right reason.

[70] 4.11.8:

> 'Thus the impurity of the soul lies in bad judgments, and its

However, this creates a problem. How can something by definition made up of correct assents be purified? Epictetus asserts the Stoic idea that preconceptions are common to all men and do not disagree among themselves. Purification, then, does not seem to be a matter of altering the preconception itself, but rather of the making of better judgements about matters *connected with* the material covered by the preconception. So, Epictetus asserts the perfect consistency of exercising impressions and 'working at' the preconceptions (4.4.26). So, if I have a judgement that health is a good, this 'defiles' the preconception of the good, since the judgement is not in accordance with the preconception and 'competes' with it, when a new related impression arrives. So the presence of the *wrong* judgements affects the way in which we see things (4.1.137), just as in the early Stoa, the impressions of the madman actually differed from those of the normal mind. This Epictetus describes as the addition of 'opinion'[71]. To the natural impression we add an artificial judgement of our own, which is again based on the 'poor criterion' of 'its appearing so' to us. We apply the preconceptions to particular instances on the basis of untested impressions, on which we cannot rely. What we need, as Epictetus tells us, is a standard (*kanon*) which is better than what simply appears to us (2.11.13f). This standard is the properly articulated system of preconceptions which we referred to in the last section.

5.5.3 It is here that we find the main significance of Epictetus' new emphasis upon the permanence of assents to false or other incognitive impressions. Whereas, for the early Stoics, the assent to an incognitive impression was, generally spoken of as an opinion with limited strength, which grew weaker in time[72], Epictetus' judgements

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> purification in the making of judgements as they ought to be. A pure soul is the one which has judgements as they ought to be. This is the only one which in its activities is unconfused and undefiled.'

[71] Not *doxa*, but *oiêsis*, a term which seems to admit of being a 'judgement' in the Epictetan sense.

[72] Plutarch *Virt.Mor* 447a where we are told that, because of the 'weakness' of the judgements and opinions from which passions result, they are 'insecure and unstable'. cf. Galen *PHP.* 4.7.12-17 = *SVF.* 3.466, where the 'contractions' in the soul which are the symptom of the passion grow weaker. This, then, seems to be the importance of the insistence that for a passion to continue, it requires a 'fresh' impression of the

could become stronger. This is best observed in connection with 'passions' which in the early Stoa were 'opinions', and in Epictetus, unsound judgments[73]. Epictetus allows for the possibility that a passion can not only be retained, but *strengthened* by further assent of the same kind:

> 'Thus, of course, the weaknesses grow up, as the philosophers tell us. Whenever we have once desired money, if reason be deployed to lead you to the perception of the evil, the desire is brought to an end, and our *hêgemonikon* is once more established in its original condition. But if you deploy nothing as a remedy, it does not relax to this point, but rather, roused up by the corresponding impression, it is inflamed into desire more quickly than before. If this happens continuously, it is calloused from then on and the weakness strengthens the avarice; for the man who has suffered a fever is not disposed in the same way after it has ceased as before he had the fever, unless he has been completely healed. It is much the same with the passions of the soul. Certain marks and scars are left on it, which if they are not well cleared away, the next time it is scourged in the same way, it does not make scars, but ulcers.' (2.18.8-11)

As the impression, on which the false judgement is based gains *strength* (3.24.108) which then can induce assent to further incognitive impressions of the same kind, giving them a 'convincing' quality (1.27.6), so a 'weakness' in our own disposition grows. So, for example, Epictetus tells us that, although Medea had bad judgements, nonetheless, her soul had great force (2.17.21-2). What Epictetus is suggesting, is that assent to a false impression, particularly of the sort which will inspire a passion, for example one which has a wrong view of the good, will become permanently installed in the disposition of the *hêgemonikon*, in such a way that, if a future impression of the same kind comes along, it will induce assent, and so

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supposed evil or good which has introduced it in the first place (cf. Andronicus περὶ παθῶν I = *SVF.* 3.391; Stob 2.88.22-89,3 = *SVF.* 3.378; Galen *PHP.* 4.2.1-6 = *SVF* 3.463.)

[73] 2.16.22&40; 3.19.3. cf. M. Nussbaum *The Therapy of Desire*, (Princeton 1994) p.390.

continue. Every time one assents, the effect becomes worse until the whole disposition is affected by it: just as right judgements can be used to destroy it, likewise it can destroy right judgements (1.28.25): the weaker our disposition, the stronger the passion[74]. We are encouraged to attend to it right away, the stronger it grows the more difficult the process of purification will become (4.1.112).

Epictetus' mention of scars will inevitably recall another aspect of Stoic pathology which is referred to by Seneca (*De Ira* 2.16.7). Seneca quotes Zeno as claiming that even the wise man, when faced with the kind of situation which would once have inspired passion, reacts with a slight 'motum', which is attributable to the *cicatrix* remaining after the wound has been healed, but this is not a true passion. A fragment of Epictetus elucidates this phenomenon (Fr.9 = Gellius 19.1.14-21). Epictetus suggests that this motion is attributable to the so-called *propatheiai*, the physical signs of fear, or anger, which accompany not only the real passion, but also the impression which inspires it (Sen *Ep.* 71.29): at the 'involuntary' stage at which the mind only receives information from the impression, but does not assent.

Seneca himself returns to the theme at *De Ira* 1.4, where he tells us, as Epictetus had done, that this first stage is 'non voluntarius', however, the subsequent effects of the passion require assent. Of the *propatheia*, Seneca says that 'it cannot be overcome by reason, but habit and continuous observation will weaken it, *but* 'alter ille motus, qui iudicio nascitur, iudicio tollitur.' In other words, the phenomenon which Seneca refers to as a 'scar' represents a different phase of the process. Seneca's scar exists in the mind of a wise man and represents a now dead propensity to passion. Epictetus is clearly referring to the *strengthening* of the disposition to assent to an impression which leads to a passion, *and which still requires to be cured*, not to 'shadow' of past passionate activity which encourages *propatheia* even after the passion has ceased and the overall disposition of the *hêgemonikon* makes future passions impossible. For Epictetus, therefore, the 'scars' are the strengthening of judgements which characteristically lead to passions. The only way to deal with them, is to get rid of the judgement (2.16.40).

Epictetus' 'purification', therefore, consists in using the preconceptions

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[74] cf. Mansfeld, 'Theory of the will...' pp.116-8

themselves to create *good* judgements and strengthen them to 'overcome' those which are contradictory (3.1.42). Preconceptions, though universal *in themselves*, are surrounded with judgments; judgements about applications, and perhaps even false conceptions, which clog up our perception of them and make them difficult for us to resort to and use as *criteria*. Hence, Epictetus tells us that to 'examine our judgments' is to 'exercise a preconception' (2.1.32) — it is a precess of self-reflection essential to discovering on what basis we assess incoming impressions and to use our impressions to improve that basis. Hence Epictetus' insistence on the need to build up judgements, even in the absence of an immediate passion: for him passion is a less immediate thing than seems to be the case for the early Stoa.

5.5.4 It is in the very nature of passions that they interfere with the process of referring to preconceptions as criteria[75]. Epictetus tells us that it is possible to become 'mad' if he can no longer 'see' what is good and evil (1.22.17): the man whose reliance in applying preconceptions is upon untested impressions creates poor judgements surrounding the preconception which make it difficult to recognize it. According to Stobaeus, passions were 'flutterings' or 'oscillations' (*ptoiai*; 2.88.8ff). This is the opposite of 'stability', the dispositional state of the wise man, according to which he assents only to the cognitive (cf. Epictetus 3.19.3), and so fluttering is connected with 'ignorance'. This fluttering, therefore, would seem to be the oscillation between assent to, or preliminary acceptance of, two competing impressions, especially where one of these were cognitive and the other not so:

> 'Some (sc. the Stoics) say that passion is not different from reason nor is there any difference or strife between the two, but rather the turning about of the same reason towards both sides which escapes our notice because of the sharpness and speed of the change, and we do not see that it is the same part of the soul with which, by nature, we desire and change our minds, are angry and fear and are carried off by pleasure towards the base, and when the soul has been carried off,

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[75] Plutarch tells us that sometimes they can 'drive out reasoning' (*Virt.Mor.* 450cd), cf. Price, *Mental Conflict*, p.149

we recover.' (Plutarch, *Virt. Mor.*446f-447a)

Ignorance is insanity, we are told, because, in its relative dispositions, it makes impressions 'unstable and fluttering' (Stobaeus. 2.68.18-23 = *SVF.* 3.663); likewise the passion is an impulse which is 'excessive and disobedient to reason'. So the result is that the *hêgemonikon* alternately disposed relatively towards the same thing in different ways according to which point in the oscillation it stands (so Epictetus 2.27.4-7). So if the object of consideration be health, we might have a judgement based on a preconception that it is not a good, and an opinion based on an assent to the incognitive impression that it is a good. The impulse in respect of health, then, fluctuates between these two judgements and thus changes accordingly, not allowing the mind to clearly perceive the impression to which it should actually assent on this occasion, throwing it into confusion[76]. In this confusion, it may well assent to the wrong impression, thus continuing the passion for another spell. Hence one of the emphases in the early Stoic account of passion is the importance of 'freshness', that is to say that the passion requires the renewal of the 'opinion', otherwise it will wear off in the normal course of events, allowing the individual to assent calmly to the right impression and put the passion at an end[77].

5.5.5 For Epictetus, the stronger dispositional status of the bad judgement, however makes this situation more serious. He also associates passions with 'fluttering' (3.24.30; 4.10.5), and tells us that a judgement can be the cause of 'disturbance and wavering' (3.19.3). Furthermore, at 4.6.14, we discover that a man cannot have correct judgements if he is not satisfied with who he is, but is 'fluttering' about how he appears to others. On the other hand, the man who gets rid of the things about which people flutter and takes account of his true business, *where he is*, is commended. This is the man, who takes proper account of his self, his disposition,

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[76] Note that the 'sharpness' of an impression is something which Epictetus warns as against, lest we be carried off by it. So we need to 'wait for' the impression and test it (2.18.22). So, if we wait for an impression, and examine it, we can avoid falling into passion, and break out of any passion which we find ourselves in.

[77] cf. Andronicus περὶ παθῶν I (=*SVF.* 3.391); Stob 2.88; Galen *PHP.* 4.2.1-6 = *SVF.* 3.463.

and does so by regard for the things which are truly under his control. So, in other words, the *dihairesis* is a way of resolving passion by resolving the oscillation between two possible judgements[78]. For Epictetus, for whom bad judgements are potentially permanent, this is a serious business indeed. We always have the latent bad judgement installed in the *hêgemonikon*, which will always generate an oscillation on every occasion in the future. As Martha Nussbaum points out (*op. cit.* p.385), one may stop grieving inasmuch as the storm of passion passes in time, but, if one's judgement does not alter, one is still vulnerable: one remains the sort of person for whom grief is natural. Epictetus' analysis of *akrasia* is along these lines: when we yield to a false impression about the good and cause a passion, we 'feed' our *akrasia* and strengthen it for the future (2.18.6), and so:

> 'It is impossible not to be the case that some dispositions and faculties should come into being from the corresponding actions which had never existed before, and others be extended and made stronger'[79]

It is exactly because of the existence of preconceptions that this is true *akrasia*: at some level, we always *know* that the passion is wrong, that external things are not goods, for example. It remains possible, therefore, to use the impressions to break into this confusion, and by the use of good judgements based on the preconceptions to break one's way out of passions[80]. It is on this basis that we can get rid of the bad judgement (2.16.40).

This account of the passions, therefore, provides us with a model of how

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[78] cf. 3.3.18-19:

> 'These, then, are the wicked judgements which we ought to cut away; concerning this we need to strain ourselves. What are wailing and crying out? Judgement. What is ill-fortune? Judgement. What is rebellion, double-mindedness, shame, accusation, impiety, foolishness? All these things are judgements about matters outwith the domain of the *prohairesis* as being goods and evils. Let someone transfer them to things within the domain of the *prohairesis* and I pledge myself that he will be stable, however his affairs are disposed.'

[79] *ibid.*7. Long, 'Representation and the Self' p.114, is thus wrong to say that Epictetus 'denied' *akrasia*.

[80] So, for example at 4.1.176, we discover that freedom comes from destroying *epithymia* by the making of judgements, cf. 2.17.14&16.

Epictetus expects us to deal with false beliefs in general. The investigation of judgements, the activity of actually looking into oneself and one's own *prohairesis* and seeing what state it is in (1.11.38-40), will naturally use preconceptions as a criterion. This activity of purification, of replacing judgements with better ones, is an activity of articulation, or, as it were, of re-articulation. So Chrysippus' placing of the investigation of *dihaireseis* under the general category of the articulation of preconceptions (DL 7.200) seems to find some kind of reflection in the position of Epictetus. Epictetus emphasises the use of preconceptions as a criterion of truth principally in the context of the division of all things into that which is within the domain of the *prohairesis*, and therefore within our power and that which is not. It is of great significance for Epictetus that we articulate the preconceptions of good and evil, by subsuming under them, that good and evil are within our power, and nothing else is. This articulation, is the first stage in the moral progress which is achieved by concentrating upon the things which are essentially within the domain of the *prohairesis*. This creates the stable dispositional state which is itself a guarantor of good assent (cf. Plutarch. *St.Rep.* 1057ab). It reflects the first stage in our *askêsis*, and the beginning of a lengthy and difficult process (1.11.40). But 'only judgements can overcome judgements' (1.29.11).

5.6 For Epictetus, as for the earlier Stoics, what might be called 'epistemological' issues are a necessary handmaid of psychology. Our minds depend entirely on our responses to impressions. These responses are, unlike the impressions themselves, an activity: hence the term 'use of impressions' as a generic term for them. Epictetus, as we noted, places considerable moral emphasis on the correctness of these responses. The avoidance of passion, and the good health of the *hêgemonikon* and *prohairesis* depend on the development of good mental states through right judgements.

The key to this is attention to the impressions which we receive, either those which come to us from outwith ourselves, or those which the mind calls up to compare with them. In the first place, we are to be cautious and unprecipitate in our first response. The impression in its raw state has no power to harm us. Only if the passive impression is assented to may it become either a helpful cognition or a false judgement or passion. We do have the power to suspend judgement and consider an impression further. In the second place, we are to make use of the criteria which have been given to us, in the form of preconceptions which we given by God, inasmuch as our minds are so determined that we shall develop these fundamental concepts. Furthermore there are certain fundamental rules or 'canons' which we can easily discover: that for example, only that which is within our power can be good or evil to us, which will guide our thinking.

What aspects of this teaching are distinctive to Epictetus? The considerable faith which he has in preconceptions as a permanently available criterion to guide our thinking is not new to the Stoa, but Epictetus clearly goes out of his way to emphasise what he regards as a providentially provided guarantee of the human *capacity* to think rightly: only the hypothetical, perfect wise man may be able to consistently think absolutely correctly, but there must be a beginning point for progress, and examination of the preconceptions and their proper application, is, to Epictetus, a realistic place to start.

In the second place, Epictetus seems to attempt to clear up an ambiguity about the status of assents to the false, and the permanent consequences of them: particularly where this leads to passion. The early Stoics placed emphasis on the transience of opinion (and also of passion), that only cognition, which required a cognitive

impression, was likely to lead to firm, permanent thinking and concepts, yet they were equally keen to emphasise the damage which could be done by false or weak assent. Epictetus' shift from cognition as a building block of the mind, to the more neutral term 'judgement' (*dogma*), allows him to offer both a warning and hope to the man who wants to make progress. The warning is that any assent to a false impression can lead to the development of firm conceptual states of mind which are difficult to eradicate. However, the hope lies in the fact that these states of mind can always be eradicated, that any *proper* assent will always have the effect of reducing the power of such false judgements. Epictetus' epistemology, like his psychology is always optimistic for those who are disposed to make progress.

Conclusion.

In conclusion we can see that our consideration of *prohairesis* and the 'use of impressions' has shown us that while Epictetus is clearly an orthodox Stoic, he nonetheless makes some innovations — including one quite significant one concerning what is within our power — to the Stoic theory where it is necessary to do justice to the emphases which he wants to make. Elsewhere he develops the theory ot fit his own particular priorities.

Epictetus' concern, as we noted, is to provide a structure by which those who are alien to philosophy can, in the first place, be reconciled to it and then make progress toward the 'end'. This first stage, which we might call a 'conversion' involves a perception of the state of one's own *hêgemonikon*. The convert to philosophy sees the unsatisfactory nature of his soul and desires to remedy it. In doing so he is aided by the introduction of some new emphases in Stoic theory.

In the first place, Epictetus sets out the end of human existence as the end point of a continuum on which the *prokoptôn* perceives himself to stand (1.3.2). By shifting the emphasis away from 'virtue' or 'wisdom' to what Dobbin calls a'neutral term', *prohairesis* (or use of impressions), which can then be qualified by such a value term as '*hoia dei*', Epictetus, while retaining the Stoic idea that *only* the extreme point is the end and good, nonetheless presents matters in such a way that the *prokoptôn* can see this end as part of a process in which he is already involved: self-contemplation and self-improvement.

In the second place, Epictetus alters the way in which we approach this progress towards virtue. A corresponding change has taken place in the way in which we describe our assents to impressions. Aside from the use of 'use of impressions' as a generic term, where the earlier Stoics used 'assent', he seems to replace 'cognition' with 'judgement' (*dogma*) (5.4.2). This is also a 'neutral' term which can be qualified: judgements can be either 'good' or 'bad', depending on the impression to which one has assented. Epictetus emphasises that, while tensional strength appertains to the *good* judgement, just as to the *cognition*, at the same time, the 'bad' judgement has a 'strength' of its own which derives, not from the *eutonia* of our disposition, but

from its weakness — we can be induced by false impressions into further passionate states (**5.5.5**).

To avoid this situation arising, and to ensure that we can 'replace poor judgments with better ones, we must 'use our impressions' carefully. Epictetus more emphasis than earlier Stoics had done on the *preconceptions*, the basic concepts about the world which we naturally develop. Such preconceptions must be applied to individual situations, and also 'purified' from false judgements about applications which adhere to them, but they remain as a god-given guide to proper assents.

In addition to the preconceptions, we are given 'canons', or 'rules' for assent (**5.2.5**). The classic example of a canon is the division between that which is within our power and that which is not (cf. *Ench.* 1). Properly applied, this will ensure that we assent properly to any impression which presents that which is outwith our power as being desirable in any way: ie that such an impression is by definition to be regarded as incognitive. By giving us an example of such a *canon*, Epictetus contributes considerably to our understanding of the Stoa.

The process of growing closer to a proper state of the *prohairesis* is also served by the way in which the *prohairesis* governs the other faculties of the soul: we noted, for example, that the conative responses which the *prohairesis* governs and acts through can be divided into three *topoi* (**2.2**). These *topoi* are set out in such a way that Epictetus gives us stages to go through in developing our disposition. In the first place we are concerned with *orexeis*. These receive a new emphasis in Epictetus. Aimed at the good, they are our fundamental desiderative judgements. Epictetus applies to them the stricture that they should aim only at the true good — the best state of the soul — otherwise they will be frustrated and lead us into the deepest and most damaging kind of passion. So Epictetus encourages us to deal with this area first. In doing so he departs from the order of categorizing ethics which seems to have been followed by the earlier Stoics (DL 7.84).

The area of impulse, which the earlier Stoics took first, comes next: once we have oriented our lives properly, we can learn to take a reasonable attitude towards 'externals'; and last of all, we can delve into strictly theoretical matters.

The question of 'externals' leads us into what is unquestionably Epictetus' most innovative work: in redefining the question of what is 'within our power'

(*eph'hêmin*). Epictetus breaks from the Stoic tradition altogether in confining what is within our power to our mental processes themselves (**3.1.1**). This has two consequences for the *prokoptôn*. In the first place, as Suzanne Bobzien points out, his pre-occupation is no longer with the idea of 'that which is within our power', but rather the 'things which are within our power'. We are thus given explicit guidelines to follow. In the second place, the focus is entirely upon those things which we are infallibly able to change: our mental processes. We need not concern ourselves any longer with responsibility for external action, the main pre-occupation of the earlier Stoics; rather we can concentrate on our own self-development.

This idea also underlies Epictetus' innovative view of the self: that it is restricted to the *mind*, expressed as *prohairesis*. This has been noted before, particularly by Robert Dobbin, but we hope to have shed some new light upon it. For Epictetus, the good for man must be a full realization of the self, and thus every aspect of the true self must be within our power to change. So the early Stoic account of the self, based on 'appropriation' (*oikeiôsis*), will not suit Epictetus' purpose, since it includes 'externals' (**4.2.1**). Epictetus opposes things which are 'alien' to us (*allotria*), not with *oikeia*, but with *idia*, our 'very own things', those things which pertain to the true self. Even our social rôles, the contingent aspects of our selves which face outwards and define our 'duties' (*kathêkonta*) are essentially aspects of our mental life (**4.3.3**).

Epictetus, then, is a philosopher who adapts the Stoic system to his own emphasis: an emphasis on the 'inner life'. Where necessary, as in the case of the doctrine on *eph'hêmin*, he is not afraid to introduce completely new thinking. Elsewhere, as in the case of his use of *prohairesis* to represent our rational faculty, and the redefining of the telos-formula to take account of this, he develops already established doctrines. Epictetus is an orthodox Stoic, but not an unimaginative one.

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