

Early Stoicism and Akrasia

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I am overcome by evil, and I realize what evil I am about to do, but my passion controls my plans.

Euripides, *Medea*¹

1. Introduction

Let us say that an agent, Medea, is akratic if and only if she freely, knowingly, and intentionally performs an action Φ against her better judgment that an incompatible action Ψ (which may only be refraining from Φ ing) is the better thing to do.² This form of succumbing to temptation Pears³ calls *last ditch akrasia*; a more extreme and more contentious thesis, which I shall not attend to, would hold that Medea also *intends* to Ψ (at the time of Φ ing).⁴ Many have held, and continue to hold, that akrasia is incoherent and does not occur. But on these skeptics falls the burden of failing to save appearances: akrasia certainly *seems* to occur – Euripides' play doesn't appear to involve an incoherent philosophy of action, and surely we all experience something which the above definition appears to capture. Its occurrence is not confined to the heat of Greek tragedy of course; Austin draws attention to its commonplace status:

I am very partial to ice cream, and a bombe is served divided into segments corresponding one to one with persons at High Table: I am tempted to help myself to two segments, thus succumbing to temptation and even conceivably (but why necessarily?) going against my principles. But do I lose control of myself? Do I raven, do I snatch the morsels from the dish and wolf them down, impervious to the consternation of my colleagues? Not a bit of it. We often succumb to temptation with calm and even finesse.⁵

¹ The translation of these famous lines (1078-9) is contentious. See C. Gill, "Did Chrysippus Understand Medea?", (*Phronesis* 28, 1983) for excellent discussion.

² Throughout this paper I use the variables Ψ and Φ for *actions*; sometimes, however, I slip between using them to stand for nouns and using them for verbs. So I might talk of "the action Ψ " (the action *running*) while on another occasion say "she intends to Ψ " (she intends to *run*).

³ D. Pears, "Motivated Irrationality", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (1982).

⁴ A note in passing: Medea almost certainly would *not* count as akratic if this clause were added.

⁵ J.L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses" in *Philosophical Papers*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

From Augustine until quite recently, something close to the later Platonic view of akrasia has dominated. The human soul was divided into faculties, one of which was designated “the will”. The strong distinction between the will and the rational faculty meant that akrasia, though needling, was not an overwhelming problem: rationally judging that Ψ is the best action was considered conceptually, and to some degree causally, isolated from desiring to Ψ . So long as this distance is in place the problem of akrasia looks less daunting. But mid-century British philosophers, especially Ryle in *The Concept of Mind*,⁶ threw “the will” into philosophical disrepute. In a new form, the Socratic connections between judging Ψ good and pursuing Ψ (between reason and action) have been reforged, and the reconnection has provoked more discussion on the topic of akrasia than the philosophical world has seen since the Ancients. In a curious way we find ourselves suddenly back where we started, prompted to examine the Greeks’ treatment of the topic not merely as an historical exercise, but as part of a pressing modern philosophical problem. This paper is devoted to an examination of the treatment of akrasia by the Stoics: one of the few philosophical systems situated after 300 B.C. (therefore able to reflectively synthesize the views of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) and before Augustine (therefore untainted by the Judaeo-Christian conception of the will). The Stoic treatment of akrasia is particularly interesting, for, in a sense, they side with Socrates as well as the dominant trend in philosophy of action in the latter half of the Twentieth Century, in that their system would appear to rule out the possibility of akrasia. Unlike Socrates, however, but like most of us, the Stoics are, perhaps, not entirely sanguine about this feature.

The object of this paper is to present an analysis of akrasia which fits consistently into the wider Stoic philosophy. Methodologically, I shall take Chrysippus as my focus, assuming, perhaps contentiously, that he is representative of early Greek Stoicism in general. By largely ignoring the divisions amongst the Greek Stoics, I do not mean to deny them; they are sidestepped merely in order to avoid distraction. Philosophical conclusions I draw do not depend on the accuracy of Chrysippus serving as Stoic representative. As a preliminary, I must also say something concerning the status of my conclusion: Is the account of akrasia with which I credit Chrysippus that which I believe he really did hold, or is it one which I think was available to him, consistent with everything which we know he did endorse, but one which it seems unlikely that he explicitly formulated (one, perhaps, that he *should* have held)? At the risk of sounding equivocal, I wish to refrain from so adjudicating. The available primary material is so frag-

⁶ G. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, (London: Hutchinson, 1949).

mentary, the doxographers' reports so unreliable, that I believe the line between exegesis and interpretation to be intractably vague regarding Chrysippus. Speculative as my conclusions may seem, they are unashamedly so, for I believe that to say anything of *philosophical* interest about Chrysippus (or the early Stoics in general) requires a willingness to step beyond the available texts.

2. *The Stoic System*

In order to discuss the Stoic view of *akrasia* in any depth it will first be necessary to lay out some of their metaphysics and epistemology. This section may be taken as presenting certain important premises which will be tied together and brought to bear on the issue of *akrasia* in the third section.

The most important metaphysical premise of the Stoic system is the belief in universal providence. The world, for them, is a carefully designed, rational system, and the best of all possible systems. It follows that although something may seem bad (illness, famine, etc.), a larger perspective – that of Zeus – will always reveal that it was for the best, a necessary sacrifice for maintaining maximal overall utility. The organisms of the world are providently designed so as to seek what is best for themselves (though are not guaranteed to achieve it). Animals (as opposed to plants) are vested with impulses (*hormai*) in order to pursue self-preservation. Humans, on the other hand, are designed such that at a certain age reason takes over from impulse as the director of self-management.

A foundational departure from Platonic and Aristotelian systems lies in the Stoics' conception of the human soul. The adult soul, they insist, is unified; it is not divided into "appetitive", "spirited", "nutritive", etc., entities, but consists entirely of the rational element. The rational soul, though without parts, does have eight different faculties: the five senses, reproductive capacity, utterance, and the ruling element (*hēgemonikón*)⁷ – the first seven being functions of the last.⁸ The world causally affects the soul, in the form of the creation of an impression (*týpōsis*) upon the senses, which results in an image or presentation (*phantasía*)⁹ to which the soul can, if it wishes, assent (*synkatáthesis*). Such assent amounts to full apprehension (*katálēpsis*). A presentation may also result in an impulse (*hormē*): a move-

⁷ SVF II 879. References of this form are to H.F.A. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, (Leipzig: 1903-14).

⁸ SVF II 875.

⁹ In this paper I conflate *týpōsis* and *phantasía*, and use the words "impression" and "presentation" interchangeably.

ment of the soul towards an object. Since the *hēgemonikón* is the rational, ruling element of the soul, all faculties of the soul are also imbued with rationality – there is no room in the (early) Stoic soul for irrational elements. The ability to assent is the fundamental hallmark of rationality (distinguishing humans from animals¹⁰), and the impulses resulting from assents in the mature human will also be, unlike animals' or children's impulses, of a rational nature. Plutarch reports Chrysippus as saying that “the impulse of man is reason prescribing action to him”;¹¹ and Diogenes Laertius says “reason supervenes as the craftsman of impulse.”¹²

Of the problems this conception raises, most pressing to the issue of *akrasia* is the fact that the Stoics' psychological commitments mean that passions, such as anger, shame, dread, delight, etc., must be in some fundamental sense *rational* movements. Unlike Zeno and Cleanthes, who may have held that passions are (feelings?) caused by the soul's judgment, Chrysippus says these passions *are* judgments, they are assents to impressions. What distinguishes passions from other judgments, for Chrysippus, is that they are false, recently-formed judgments that something is good or bad, and ones that provoke forceful and excessive impulses.¹³ They are false because of universal providence: if I stub my toe I may be inclined to think it a “bad thing” and feel irritated or even angry. If, however, I assent to it really being a bad thing, then I am making a mistake, because, in the grand scheme of things, the stubbing of my toe was right and proper and willed by a benevolent Zeus. Judging something very good will also be inevitably mistaken, for (again, because of providence) nothing that occurs is really any better than anything else. Because passions are false they are “contrary to nature” and thus, we might be tempted to say, “irrational” (if, by “in harmony with nature”, we understand “in harmony with universal reason”). The impulses which are consequent to the assent will also have a flavour of “irrationality”, in that the agent will be moved to act as if something were greatly desirable (or undesirable) when it is really not. It remains to be seen, then, how the Stoics can consistently uphold the position that passions are *rational* movements.

¹⁰ Though Long and Sedley (p.322) note that occasionally animals are credited with some, presumably non-rational, analogue of assent: Nemesius, *De natura hominis*, 291, 1-6 (LS 53O); Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato*, 181,13-182,20 (LS 62G). All quotes accompanied by the A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley numbering (e.g. LS 58B) utilise their translation unless otherwise stated: *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹¹ *De stoicorum repugnantiiis*, 1037F (LS 53R).

¹² *Lives*, 7.86 (LS 57A).

¹³ See J.S. Gould, *The Philosophy of Chrysippus*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), especially p. 182, for discussion and references.

I have identified the passion with the judgment (privileging the Chrysippian account), and talked of the impulse as some consequent event in the soul, but I wish now to question the latter assumption. Galen describes Chrysippus: “he tries to show the affections are judgments and are not something supervening on judgment.”¹⁴ Plutarch reports the Stoics as affirming “that not every judgment is an emotion, but only that which sets in motion a violent and excessive impulse.”¹⁵ On the other hand, Arius Didymus tells us that “passion is impulse which is excessive.”¹⁶ And Galen complains that Chrysippus goes on (after giving the above definition) to say that “affection is also appropriately called excessive impulse.”¹⁷

I believe that we can accommodate these seemingly competing positions by drawing the assenting judgment and the impulse conceptually closer. Arius Didymus, though identifying passions with impulses, earlier has told us that the Stoics said that “all impulses are assents.”¹⁸ Galen interprets Chrysippus’ view that passions are judgments as entailing that “he is using judgment as a name for impulse and assent.”¹⁹ Recently, Nussbaum has argued persuasively that emotional turmoil is not something which *results from* a rational assent to something being the case. Rather, to fully assent to a value-laden proposition (that, for example, my irreplaceable and wonderful lover is dead) *is* the emotional upheaval.

If I go up to embrace it [“the baneful appearance”], if I take it into myself, open myself to receive it, I am at that very moment putting the world’s knife into my own insides. That’s not preparation for the upheaval, that’s upheaval itself. That very act of assent is itself a wrenching, tearing violation of my self-sufficiency and my undisturbed condition.²⁰

To identify the judgment with the impulse would explain, at least, the apparent inconsistencies for which Galen pours scorn on Chrysippus. Let us

¹⁴ *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, IV 1.17, trans. by P. De Lacy (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1978) p. 239.

¹⁵ *De virtute morali*, 449C, W.C. Helmbold trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), (SVF III 384). Plutarch seems to think that because passions involve excessive impulses but not all judgments involve such impulses, passions can not be judgments. Although the premises indicate that the predicate “is a judgment” has a wider application than “is an emotion”, it is still quite possible that the extension of one is a proper subset of the other. In other words, Plutarch’s observations fail to rebut Chrysippus’ contention that every passion is a judgment.

¹⁶ Stobaeus, *Eclogae*, 2.88,8 (LS 65A).

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, IV 5.13.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, 2.88 (LS 33I).

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, IV 3.7.

²⁰ M. Nussbaum, “The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions”, *Apeiron* 20, No. 2 (1987), p. 153.

say that the assent to a proposition is the movement of the soul towards an action; they are differing descriptions of one and the same event in the soul.²¹ Arius' last mentioned quote is followed by an argument against the identification I am suggesting. He argues that impulses could not be assents (despite the fact that he reports this as the Stoic view) because "acts of assent and impulses actually differ in their objects: propositions are the objects of acts of assent, but impulses are directed towards predicates, which are contained in a sense in the proposition."²² We could ignore this as Arius' own argument, and therefore not an early Stoic, or Chrysippian, commitment; however, it will prove very useful to the discussion of akrasia to spend some time pursuing it.

Arius says impulses have predicates as their objects because impulses are movements of the soul towards action – they are *causes* of action. Impulses therefore cause a change in something (the body: its location, position, etc.). The Stoic view of causation is often put in terms of one object being the cause of a predicate becoming true of another object. Sextus Empiricus, for example, writes, "the scalpel, a body, becomes the cause to the flesh, a body, of the incorporeal predicate 'being cut'".²³ An impulse to eat, therefore, has as its object a predicate "being eaten (by me)" which it moves the soul towards making true of some food. Alternatively (and consistently), the same impulse moves the soul to make the predicate "has eaten (that food)" true of me. There is no unique correct description of the object. The act of assenting to a presentation, on the other hand, has a complete "sayable" (lekton) as its object: the soul assents to the proposition "there is food in front of me".²⁴ We can see the presentation, sans assent, as being like the

²¹ For modern support, see A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, (London: Duckworth, 1986) p. 176; M. Frede, "The Stoic doctrine of the affections of the soul" in *The Norms of Nature*, ed. by M. Schofield and G. Striker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) p. 106; also B. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), who asserts that "it is a matter of relative indifference whether one identifies them or treats the impulse as the result of the assent." p. 131.

²² *Op. cit.*, 2.88 (LS 331).

²³ *Adversus mathematicos*, 9.211 (LS 55B).

²⁴ Throughout this paper I make the assumption that when one assents to an impression one is assenting to the corresponding proposition. Arius is unequivocal on this. From Sextus Empiricus we also have: "true [impressions] are ones of which it is possible to make a true assertion", *op. cit.*, 7.242-6 (LS 39G); and later, "a rational impression is one in which the content of the impression can be exhibited in language", 8.70 (LS 33C). Diogenes Laertius writes, "For the impression arises first, and then the thought, which has the power of talking, expresses in language what it experiences by the agency of the impression", 7.49 (LS 33D). Inwood makes a good discussion of this point in his book (*op. cit.*, pp. 57-66).

soul realising that it's *as if* food is in front of it; the assent adds commitment that it is the case. Chrysippus argues that the soul can receive many presentations at once; rejecting Cleanthes' "wax seal" metaphor, he likens the soul to the air around a crowded conversation, undergoing numerous simultaneous movements in response to the many voices.²⁵ Thus, as well as receiving the presentation "there is food in front of me", I may also simultaneously receive the impression "there is steak in front of me", "I feel hungry", "it looks extremely appetising", etc. Though I have found no textual support, there seems no reason to hesitate in concluding that the soul can *assent* to all these presentations simultaneously. A little introspection (for what it's worth) would seem to uphold this: when I move from thinking that it is as if the steak has been laid before me (well-done, appetising, with potatoes, etc.) to an act of assent that this is the case, surely I assent to all these propositions *en masse*. When one reflects on the numerous propositions that appear to be true of the world before me, even just restricting oneself to the visual field, to hold that I assent to them *piecemeal* seems ludicrous.

If this is objectionable, there is a weaker thesis to make the same point. When I assent to the proposition "there is a steak in front of me", surely I automatically assent to certain logical concomitants: "there is a piece of meat in front of me", "there is food in front of me", "there is something in front of me". This is different than the previous point: there I sketched a picture of several assents happening at once, responding to different "pieces" of the visual field, contingently associated. The weaker thesis means that one and the same assent will be to different propositions logically or analytically associated. To assent to "there is a steak" I have to be able to subsume the presentation I am getting under the general concept "steak", and I do not have that concept unless I know that steak is food. Therefore it would be impossible for me to assent to "there is steak" *without* assenting to "there is food" (or "there is something"). What I am suggesting then, is that a single movement of the soul can be taken as an assent to a number of logically entwined propositions.

I would like to steer the above suggestions to a conclusion against Arius. One and the same movement of the soul (*qua* impulse) can be towards different predicates, depending on description. Using only the "weaker thesis", I believe we can conclude that one and the same movement of the soul (*qua* assent) can be towards different propositions, depending on description. In each case there is a range of acceptable predicates or propositions by which one can truly describe the object of the movement. This being so, there seems nothing to prevent one going further, and saying that one and

²⁵ SVF II 56.

the same movement of the soul may be properly described as an impulse *or* as an act of assent, the range of acceptable objects including both predicates and propositions. Qua impulse, the movement takes predicates; qua assent, it takes propositions. Inwood's unpursued comment seems useful here – he suggests that an impulse “is not an independently specifiable mental event, but is a theoretical entity posited to do a theoretical job.”²⁶ Impulses, he seems to be saying, should properly be *functionally*-construed. Two or more functional roles may be simultaneously instantiated by one physical event. Like Inwood, I will leave this point undeveloped, but consider it as evidence to the conclusion that Arius' observation does not amount to an argument for non-identity, merely for perspective-sensitive treatment.

I have attempted to identify acts of assent with impulses in order to disambiguate the location of “the passion” within the Stoic system – to locate the referent. But the foregoing argument was also useful for exposing how, within the Stoic soul, there can be more than one assent at a time. I will employ this conclusion, especially in the stronger form, as a premise below, when I come to discuss *akrasia*. To be clear, let me present the stronger thesis once more. Imagine I am shown a painted picture – let this be the presentation. It is *as if* there is a house in the picture, smoke coming from the chimney, flowers in the garden, etc. Now, it's not as if the picture presents a single presentation: many propositions are true of the picture. Chrysippus unambiguously suggests a model such that I can receive many presentations at once. Usually I would not assent to the presentation(s) in question; of course, I assent to it being the case that there is a *picture* of a house in front of me, but not that there's a house in front of me. But suppose I *do* assent to the latter (suppose it's a particularly life-like, *trompe l'oeil* presentation). Which, exactly, presentation or proposition do I assent to? Surely, if I assent at all, I assent to a number: “there is a house in front of me”, “there are red flowers in the garden”, “there is a fire inside”, etc. (Less contentiously, surely if I assent to “there is a house in front of me” then I assent to “there is a building in front of me”; or if I assent to “the flowers are red”, then “the flowers are coloured”.) My perceptual beliefs are not formed piecemeal, they come in packages – some linked by logic, others purely contingently.

Acts of assent do not always involve perception or existentially-quantified propositions. One can affirm logical connections (“if p, then q”, “all ps are qs”) and normatively-loaded propositions (“ps are good”). One can assent to a presentation that doesn't come immediately from the senses, such as in the case of memory. More importantly for my purposes here,

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

even in cases of perception, the act of assent that such-and-such is the case invariably involves applying a general or singular term – which pre-exists in the soul – to an item of perception. Two examples: when I assent to “there is a steak” I must have the concept “steak” already existing in my soul in order to so categorise my experience. When I assent to “there is Socrates” I must have the name “Socrates” already existing in my soul in order to so categorise my experience. In what follows I will pay attention to the former – the application of a general predicate, or concept, to experience.

The ability to apply concepts to one’s experience is the very hallmark of the Stoic conception of rationality. One gains concepts through perceptual experience, creating new concepts from the old via the processes of resemblance, analogy, transposition, composition, and contrariety.²⁷ This process is part of the natural development of a human: humans are considered naturally rational *because* they naturally categorise their experiences. Sextus Empiricus writes that it is not the case that humans “differ from the other creatures in virtue of simple impressions – for they too receive these – but in virtue of impressions created by inference and combination,”²⁸ and Galen quotes Chrysippus’ *On reason*: “Reason is a collection of certain conceptions and preconceptions.”²⁹ Whenever one assents to a proposition, one applies certain concepts to one’s experience. Long writes that the *hēgemonikōn* “responds to the impression by interpreting and classifying it, seeing it as, say, a black dog and not merely as a shape of a certain colour and size.”³⁰ Of course, few impressions are infallible, and one can certainly make mistakes, misapplying a concept: I may apply the concept “dog” to a dimly perceived cat, apply “good” to something indifferent, etc. One can, presumably, through miseducation, learn to systematically misapply a concept. For example, the Stoics would analyze the Epicureans as systematically misapplying the concept “good” to their impressions, assenting to all pleasurable impressions with “this is good”. More idiosyncratic misapplications are easily imaginable: an arachnophobe misapplies the concept “frightening” or “bad” to all impressions to which he also applies “spider”. This last example also gives a good chance to see how in assenting – in, that is, applying a concept – one’s soul is also moved to action: the arach-

²⁷ Diogenes Laertius, *op. cit.*, 7.53 (LS 39D).

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, 8.275-6 (LS 53T).

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, V 3.1 (LS 53V). De Lacy translates “ἐννοιών” and “προλήψεων” as “notions” and “concepts”. John Cooper has (in conversation) suggested “pre-concept” as a translation of the latter technical term.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

nophobe, on applying “frightening” to the spidery impression, is in the same motion impelled to avoidance behaviour. The behaviour is not a consequent effect of the assent. How the soul is moved to action (what impulses occur) can therefore also be, to some degree, an idiosyncratic feature, depending on the connections between the concepts that one assents to. The impulse of a starving man when assenting to “there is food” is quite different than that when he is sated; the impulse of the glutton is different than that of the temperate agent.

The sage will apply the concept “spider” when, and only when, confronted with a spider. She also has the concept “frightening” though never applies it, because she never assents to anything, let alone spiders, being frightening. Such a sage has perfect rationality, but the arachnophobe, for all his misapprehension, is still in important ways “rational.” He has made a mistake in forging a connection between fearfulness and spiderhood, but it is, nevertheless, rationality which rules his thoughts and actions: he thinks “if x is a spider, x is frightening” and “this is a spider”, therefore he thinks “this is frightening”. And the impulse to action which has become associated (through experience) with the last judgment is the appropriate one: he is moved to run away.³¹ It is the *hēgemonikón* which applies the concepts and makes logical connections, and the *hēgemonikón* is entirely rational. The fact that it may, on occasions, misapply concepts and make false connections does not mean that it ceases to be rational. It does reveal, perhaps, that it has been exposed to a skewed or incomplete view of the universe; for, being naturally rational, the *hēgemonikón* will always make the right judgments if its conditions (including conditions during past episodes of concept-formation) are optimal. Given almost inevitably *suboptimal* epistemic conditions, the human is prone to error, but is no less rational for that.

I have moved through several areas of the Stoic system – providence, epistemology, rationality – seemingly, perhaps, without direction. But the discussion has laid out and argued for some of the most important theses which in the next section I shall apply to the issue of *akrasia*.

³¹ This “become associated” should not be taken to undermine the earlier identity claim I made. Suppose at time t assent to the proposition “ X is a good way to get a Ph.D.” is identical with a certain movement of the soul towards an action: pursuit, let’s say. They are, as I argued, ways of looking at the same psychological event. Through experience, one’s attitudes may change, one may learn certain things, come to assent to other conceptual connections. Eventually, at time $t+1$, assent to the proposition “ X is a good way to get a Ph.D.” is identical with a different movement of the soul: an impulse to avoid. On pain of contradicting Leibniz’s Law, we must say that the event which is the assent to the proposition is not quite the same event as it once was, but the change need not extend as far as us thinking that assent to a different proposition is involved.

3. Akrasia

For their account of akrasia the Stoics have always been admonished by their critics, so much so that significant changes to the system were made by Posidonius the 1st century B.C., probably largely in order to accommodate the phenomenon more smoothly. The problem is as follows: if the soul is unified and rational, then how could it do otherwise than it judges best? – if the rational processes of the soul judge that Ψ is best, and it is the soul alone that is responsible for action, then what room is there for the agent to choose not to Ψ ? – where would the urge to Φ come from? The intuitive appearance of akratic action is one of *conflict*, between my judgment and my desire – between, one is tempted to say, competing parts of my mind. But, at first gloss, there is no room for such divisions in the Stoic soul: it has no parts, so there are no parts to come into conflict. If emotions are judgments, then what room is there for the emotion which appears to overwhelm judgment? By comparison, the Platonic “usurpation model” – where the rational soul is hijacked by the forces of the thumoeides or epithumētikon – seems plausible. That the Stoics denied the existence of akrasia (understood as a rational faculty being worsted by passion) seemed to Plutarch “contrary to the clear evidence of our perceptions.”³²

In place of the Platonic orthodoxy, Chrysippus is taken by Plutarch to have offered the “oscillation model” as the correct analysis of akrasia (below I will argue against the adequacy of this interpretation). The soul, essentially, changes its mind from moment to moment as to what is best, and at any given time slice there is no real conflict. This oscillation, in the words of Plutarch, is “a conversion of one and the same reason to its two aspects; this escapes our notice by reason of the suddenness and swiftness of the change.”³³ Plutarch may have seen Chrysippus seeking literary support in the seeming vacillation of Medea, contemplating the murder of her children (see lines 1036-1062 of Euripides’ play). Despite the fact that it is likely that Euripides’ intent was to illustrate a Platonic conflict – the voice of reason and the voice of thumos contesting³⁴ – since at any given time only one voice speaks, only one voice urges to action, the impression is one of oscillation. This wavering between different judgments is taken by Plu-

³² *Op. cit.*, 447B. The point still echoed today; E.J. Lemmon, in “Moral Dilemmas” (*Philosophical Review* 71, 1962) writes, “Perhaps akrasia is one of the best examples of a pseudo-problem in philosophical literature: in view of its existence, if you find it a problem you have already made a philosophical mistake.”

³³ *Op. cit.*, 446F-447A.

³⁴ See B. Snell, *Scenes from Greek Drama*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964) p. 52.

tarch to be how Stoic theory satisfies what he takes to be an important desideratum: the feeling of conflict that agents sometimes experience.

This oscillation model would have us view Medea as applying, at time t , the concept “revenge-demanding” to the situation; then at $t+1$ she retracts it, and applies “maternal love-demanding” to the situation, then retracts this at $t+2$. She also assents to a number of conditional propositions, in particular: “if I am betrayed, then I must seek vengeance”³⁵ and “if I have children, then I must love them.” The explanation for her assent to these presentations lies in her past: she learned such things through experience, as her rational faculties developed (they may, for all that, be false). She is not *forced* by reason to assent to anything, of course, for assenting or withholding assent are within her autonomous control (see footnote 39). But we might say that rationality “presses” Medea in certain ways (e.g., if she assents to “ p ” and “if p then q ”, then she will be pressed for assent to “ q ”). In this case it presses her to assent to the presentation that the situation calls for unconditional vengeance and *simultaneously* presses her to assent that the situation calls for maternal love. Normally the two things would not be in conflict, but her deliberative powers also lead her to see that the best, or only, way to achieve complete satisfaction of the demand for vengeance is to murder her children. By applying the concept “revenge-demanding”, she will also be led, via assent to conditionals, to apply the concept “infanticide-demanding”. But those very same reasoning capacities also call for the application of the concept “maternal love-demanding” to the situation (or “not-infanticide-demanding”).

Somewhere Medea has gone wrong, for reason, properly applied, does not lead to such a predicament. Presumably the error lies in one or more of the conditionals she assents to, revealing a biased or incomplete experience of the world. The sage, via reflection on the providence of the universe, has realised that to leave one’s “foes unpunished, and so earn their mockery” is not something to care deeply about. Medea, however, lacks this wisdom, and, consequently, contradictory presentations press upon her. In addition, to assent to some of these propositions is to unleash an impulse to action. What type of action is associated with assent to a particular proposition (and how strong that impulse is) may also be, I have argued, an idiosyncratic

³⁵ This conditional may be the product of others. In the play, Medea seems motivated to avoid at all costs the public dishonour that unavenged betrayal would bring. She asserts, “Do I wish to leave my foes unpunished, and so earn their mockery?”, “The laughter of foes is not to be endured”, “Grievous to foes, and serviceable to friends; For such the lives that win the fairest fame.” Her vengeance, despite Galen’s assertion that she “was not persuaded by any reasoning to kill her children” (IV 2.27) seems reasoned straight from premises to which she assents.

feature of the agent, perhaps the result of a somewhat unusual history. Medea, conceivably, is particularly sensitive to betrayal, so much so that the impulse which comes with applying the concept “revenge-demanding” to a presentation is a particularly violent and uncompromising one.

Accounting for the phenomenon of conflict is only part of an adequate theory. Many also feel that *akrasia* involves an obvious feeling of reason being “overwhelmed” that requires explanation – something that the oscillation model does not purport to explain: that at the very time of performing Φ Medea rationally judges Ψ to be the better option. This alleged desideratum may be accounted for with an additional appeal to impulses.³⁶ Medea’s assent to Φ at t has unleashed an impulse towards that action, for which retraction of concept-application and assent to a contrary proposition is insufficient to check. Thus, at $t+1$ Medea finds herself performing Φ in spite of the fact that at $t+1$ she is judging Ψ the better option. Such an irretrievable impulse will be excessive in that it will be beyond what nature prescribes. In support of such an interpretation Galen cites Chrysippus’ use of the metaphor of the runner – when walking, a person can stop herself easily and at will, but when running at speed autonomous control is lost.³⁷ The decision to run was the agent’s, but once that decision is executed certain consequences ensue which are beyond simple control or the power of recall.³⁸

Plutarch’s and Galen’s interpretations of the Stoic account of *akrasia* sit uncomfortably with each other. Though in endorsing both of these analyses Chrysippus would not be actually inconsistent, it certainly seems true that if

³⁶ This analysis of the Stoic account is suggested by sections of Galen’s discussion (*op. cit.*, IV 2 and 5.13-15), though admittedly is never made fully explicit. See also J. Gosling’s “The Stoics and *Akrasia*”, *Apeiron* 20, No.2 (1987), pp. 189-90, and Gould, *op. cit.*, VI 3.

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, IV 2.15-44.

³⁸ Talking of the assent “unleashing” an impulse need not be incompatible with my earlier argument that the two are one. What it does require is that the impulse-aspect of the movement of the soul has certain consequences – which we might be tempted to call part of the “impulse” – which are distinct from the judgment/impulse, and when the judgment is retracted the causal consequences of the impulse continue for a while. What I want to insist upon is that these causal consequences are just that: *consequences* – they are not the impulse itself, any more than they are the judgment. It is the temptation to call these consequences of the impulse the impulse itself which creates tensions; Gould, for example, is led to the view that impulses are something *bodily*, which defies Chrysippus’ definition (*op. cit.*, pp. 182-3). The consequences of the impulse may well be bodily changes which play an important role in *akratic* action, but the impulse itself is clearly intended to be a psychical event. When we talk of a judgment “unleashing” an impulse, I suggest that we are talking about a movement of the soul (which is both a judgment and an impulse) which, *qua* impulse, unleashes certain bodily forces.

he supported either one of them, he would have little need for the other. Rather than attempt to get to the bottom of this, I prefer to argue that we can do better for Chrysippus than either of these theories. The problem with Galen's story is the same as that which traps the Platonic view. Indeed, this view looks a lot like the Platonic view, in that the act of judgment is "usurped" by a force beyond the rational faculty's power to control (thumos and epithumia have merely been replaced by impulses). One might suspect that Galen, having strong sympathies with Platonic psychology, is motivated to make the Stoic account collapse into a pseudo-Platonic view, thereby supporting his own commitments. The problem is that of *responsibility*: if the agent's actions are the result of forces beyond the agent's control, and in spite of all the agent might do to prevent them, then they are not "actions" at all, for they are not free. This analysis, then, would not explain akratic *action* (and we are assuming that akrasia is by definition a type of action). Plutarch's oscillation model, on the other hand, fails to allow that at the very time of Φ ing the agent's judgment is that Ψ is the better thing to do. This analysis is essentially eliminativist – denying that the phenomenon, as I initially defined it, exists. To burden the Stoics with either of these analyses is to do them no favours (which is hardly surprising, given both doxographers' dissatisfaction with Chrysippus). And to hold that they somehow combined both of these accounts does nothing to suggest a "mixed solution", but merely doubles the burden. The charity that I extend to the Stoics throughout this paper requires an alternative reading.

Medea is being pressed by conflicting presentations: it seems as if revenge is called for (which, if assented to, leads it to seem as if infanticide is called for) and it seems as if maternal love is called for. Instead of seeing Medea as oscillating between assents, let us imagine that *she assents to both simultaneously*. I have already argued at length to make room for simultaneous assents to different propositions. At this point I might add the observation that there was not much purpose for Chrysippus' going to the trouble of insisting that we can receive many presentations at once if he did not also think that we may be able to assent to more than one at a time. Here, things appear more extreme, for she seems, at first glance, to be assenting to *contradictory* propositions: infanticide is called for, infanticide is not called for. The hēgemonikón is rational, so does not happily assent to contradictions. But it *can* assent to contradictions, since it is an autonomous faculty, and assent (or withholding of assent) is never compelled.³⁹

³⁹ The Stoic views on freedom are complicated and beyond my scope here. It would appear that Chrysippus attempted to have his cake and eat it too (see Gould, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-52). I will merely say that insofar as Chrysippus allows genuine autonomy into his

Sextus Empiricus' classification of impressions includes those that are "true *and* false" and those which are "neither true nor false."⁴⁰ His examples make clear that one can *assent* to such presentations (as did Orestes of Electra's being a Fury), thereby assenting to contradictory propositions. The Stoic discussion of logical fallacies also abounds with people being led to assent to inconsistent propositions. In the "heap" argument, for example, the dupe may assent to "a million grains make a heap", "a non-heap is not made a heap by the addition of one more grain", and "one grain does not make a heap". What distinguishes such cases from the akrasia case, of course, is that the agent does not *knowingly* assent to a contradiction. The unknowing victim of sophistry does not simultaneously assent to "it's a heap" and "it's not a heap"; rather, he assents to "it's a heap" and assents to certain other propositions that logically *entail* "it's not a heap." But need we see Medea as so very different? Despite my earlier suggestions, the *prima facie* analysis of akrasia does *not* require that she assents to "p" and "not-p". The *prima facie* analysis means she assents to " Ψ is the best option available to me" while performing the action Φ . On my account this means that the action Φ is the product of an assent to a presentation as Φ -demanding (applying the concept " Φ -demanding"). Both assents may include impulses which move her towards action, and the impulses may operate concurrently. There is no reason to assume that the one associated with judging what is best will win out, for, as I have argued, the connection between proposition and the nature and strength of associated impulse is, to some degree at least, an idiosyncratic and time-relative affair. In the case of akratic action, the impulse to Φ produces action; any impulse associated with assent to the other proposition is overridden. Despite this, Medea's assent to the evaluative judgment need not be half-hearted; imagine her commitment in the strongest terms permissible within the Stoic theory.

The propositions " Ψ is the best option available to me" and "the situation is Φ -demanding" are not contradictory, and Medea, at one and the same time, may assent to them both without immediate inconsistency. Even if the first proposition logically entails (with a few intermediaries, let's say) the proposition "it is not the case that the situation is Φ -demanding" then Medea is no worse off than the gull of the heap argument. Although at another

system, *assent* is where it lies. Epictetus, *Discourses*, I 1,7-8 (LS 62K): "the one thing the gods have placed in our power is the one of supreme importance, the correct use of impressions"; IV 1,69: "No one can make you assent to what is false, can he? – No one. – Well, then, in the region of assent you are free from hindrance and restraint." See also Plutarch, *De stoicorum repugnantiis*, 1075A; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato*, p. 184.20-22; Sextus Empiricus, *op. cit.*, 8.397.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, 7.244-6 (LS 39G).

time she may assent to all the intermediate logical steps (as does the dupe), at the moment of action she does not. In fact, she may well be actively suppressing belief in these conditionals. In very important ways, however, Medea may even be more consistent in her belief-states than the victim of sophistic arguments. When we cash out the variables as follows – “not killing my children is the best option available to me” and “the situation demands I kill my children” – there is no way of producing an inconsistency via intermediaries using only the laws of logic. Bear in mind what, in the Stoic system, the former proposition amounts to: that not killing her children is in accordance with the will of Zeus, is part of the providential design. There is no logical inconsistency in Medea believing this to be the case, while deciding to defy Zeus and kill her children all the same. (She might *not* believe in Stoic doctrine, of course, but let’s imagine that she does.) Naturally, the *sage* would never assent to “ Ψ is the best option available to me” while seeing the situation as “not- Ψ -demanding”, for the sage lets his actions and assents be determined by Zeus; but Medea, simply, is no sage, nor does she pretend to be, even to herself. The problematic is not how a perfectly rational being could be akratic, but how an ordinary, possibly flawed and misguided being could be akratic.

Let me pause and review the structure of the discussion. I suggested a model in which Medea could assent to more than one presentation at a time. It seemed to me that there was no reason, in principle, why two simultaneous assents might not be to contradictory propositions. This may “trouble” the rational *hēgemonikón*, but is not out of the question, due to its autonomy. However, I moved on to show that we need *not* interpret Medea as assenting to direct contradictories, but perhaps just two propositions which require intermediate steps in order to be “made” inconsistent – steps which, at the time, Medea will not assent to. I likened this to the psychological state of the victim of sophistic paradox. I was able, however, to weaken even more: all that is (*prima facie*) necessary for akratic action is that Medea simultaneously assents to “ Ψ ing (not Φ ing) is the best option available to me” and “the situation is Φ -demanding”, the assent to the latter proposition including an impulse to Φ , resulting in Φ ing action. These two propositions are not logical contradictories, which becomes clear when we flesh out what the former proposition amounts to in Stoic terms. This account is an advance on merely making space within the Stoic system for the agent to judge that some action is best without performing it – it satisfies some further crucial desiderata: it explains what it might mean to judge that something is best, it provides the origin of the Φ ing action (the application of the concept “ Φ -demanding” to the situation), and it explains why there is no necessary connection between judgment and action. Nevertheless, there

are various ways in which we might be troubled by the account, three of which I shall now attempt to address – in the process, the model will be elucidated further.

4. Rationality, Unity and Responsibility

First, we may be troubled by the fact that the Stoics have told us that the human soul *is* entirely rational, and Medea is clearly being less than rational – as noted above, the sage, as a perfectly rational agent, will never find himself in the psychological straits described. A “perfectly rational” faculty (the *hēgemonikón*) can make mistakes: it can judge that there is a dog when there is no dog, and is no less rational for that. But the misapplication of a concept alone will not be enough for the agent to count as akratic. The akratēs, Chrysippus tells us, is “not obedient to reason”, her movements are “disobedient to reason and rejecting it.”⁴¹ Shortly afterwards (in Galen) Chrysippus explicitly says, however, that “It is not the case that if a person is carried away by error and from a misapprehension of something that is in accord with reason, he is also acting in a way that rejects and disobeys reason.” Here, Galen points out, Chrysippus “very properly distinguishes affections from errors.”⁴² Therefore it is not in the misapplication of the concept “ Φ -demanding” that Medea is irrational in the required way. I suggest that she is irrational because she applies it while *simultaneously* believing that the designs of Zeus prescribe not Φ ing. It is not because this constitutes assent to a contradiction that she is irrational (for I have argued that we need not interpret her as doing so), nor is it because she assents to something against the will of Zeus that she is irrational (that would be mere error). She is irrational because she assents to something against the will of Zeus *while believing* that it is against the will of Zeus; knowing that the rational design of the universe prescribes Ψ , she chooses not to Ψ . This action satisfies Chrysippus’ requirement of “disobedience” and “rejection” of reason. These two terms imply intentionality – they imply that the akratēs goes against nature *on purpose* – she does not “fall away from Reason” (as Inwood says⁴³), but *turns* away. One cannot “turn away” (understanding this as a very intentional idiom) without knowing that one is doing so, without knowing what Nature calls for at the moment of choosing otherwise. Chrysippus also uses a very intentional metaphor when he cites the words of Menander: “I got my mind in my hand and stowed it in a pot”.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Galen, *op. cit.*, IV 2.11-18 (LS 65J).

⁴² *Op. cit.*, IV 2.24-5.

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 163-4.

⁴⁴ Galen, *op. cit.*, IV 6.34.

The mind (or “good sense”) does not find itself heedlessly overwhelmed – it is withdrawn, intentionally and freely, from the practical decision procedure.

What I have done, in effect, is distinguish two forms of “irrationality” (both different from assenting to contradictory propositions). The first is to make a judgment at odds with the rationality of the universe. A passion, as I earlier described it, is irrational (at least) in this sense. The associated impulse, which is often called “excessive”, is described as irrational in this way by Cicero, describing Zeno’s definition of passion as “an agitation of the soul alien to right reason”, which he explains as “removed too far from the equability of Nature” and “contrary to Nature”.⁴⁵ Diogenes Laertius fills out “in accordance with Nature” as “in accordance with our own human nature as well as that of the universe,...identical with this Zeus, lord and ruler of all that is.”⁴⁶ But the *akratēs* does more than act on a passion, she so acts *knowing* that she is being irrational in the first sense. In doing so, she is irrational in another sense, in that she purposefully rejects the rationality of the universe. Chrysippus writes that lovers and angry persons “want to gratify their anger...whether it is better or not,...and that this is to be done by all means, even if they are wrong and it is not to their advantage.”⁴⁷ (Metaphorically, they move from “falling from Reason” to “turning from Reason”.) The irrationality necessary for *akrasia* requires judging that Ψ is in accordance with Nature and rejecting this as determining one’s actions. The further necessary condition (which, with the last, constitute sufficient conditions) is that the agent actually *acts* contrary to Ψ .

But even this type of irrationality is consistent with a perfectly rational faculty of judgment. The *hēgemonikón* is behaving rationally in the following manner: its past experience has led it to respond to certain situations with a certain concept-application (and this, recall, is the very hallmark of rationality for the Stoics). It took this connection, perhaps, to be consistent with universal providence. It is only now, in an extraordinary situation, that it finds that the consequences of assenting in this way clash with what it clearly sees as the rationality of providence. Despite this realisation, it chooses to apply the concept anyway, and the impulse leads to action accordingly. It is as if I choose to ignore the advice of my doctor: it is good advice, I am sure, but I just choose not to follow it, and in doing so I am not being inconsistent. There is no inconsistency in the two sentences: “My

⁴⁵ *Tusculan disputations*, IV 11 and 47. J.E. King trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, 7.88.

⁴⁷ Galen, *op. cit.*, IV 6.27. See also Arius Didymus, *op. cit.*, 2.89-90 (LS 65A).

doctor says I should exercise” and “I shan’t exercise”. If my doctor’s advice constitutes the *norms of rationality*, as would be the case were my doctor Zeus, then it *would* be “irrational” in a certain sense, but still my decision not to follow his advice would be consistent (and the faculty which freely chooses to ignore the advice may still be properly regarded in an important sense as rational).

Second, it may also be objected that the picture I have drawn in some fundamental way contradicts the Stoic thesis that the soul is unitary. Exactly what the “unity of the soul” amounts to is, upon examination, elusive. Arguably, all along what the Stoics primarily intended when they insisted upon a monistic soul was a soul without physical differentiation, without distinct organs in different parts of the body. Reading Galen on Chrysippus one certainly gets the impression that what is largely under dispute is the organic location of the soul in a single place.⁴⁸ The much stronger readings of the unity thesis, such that the *hēgemonikón* can only entertain one proposition at a time, that it can not have (in any sense) conflict between its dispositions, are, I suggest, to some degree straw man arguments from hostile doxographers. The important Stoic thesis to salvage is that everything that occurs in the soul is, in some sense, the product of one and the same rational faculty.

The *unity thesis* (as I’ll call it) may concern the “harmony” of mental states – the lack of conflict, or inconsistency. Inwood, after concluding that this thesis couldn’t possibly mean that there are no parts to the soul, nor that the soul has no enduring distinctions, goes on to say, “If the soul is monistic at all, it is going to be in the sense that the various powers of the soul all function together harmoniously, with no internal conflict or opposition.”⁴⁹ As I’ve argued at length, the *akratēs*’ psychology contains no formal inconsistency, but, for all that, it may contain conflict. Medea’s situation certainly reveals some sort of serious discomfort: she does not perform her action smoothly and contentedly. Yet the logical relation between her assents need not be to blame – much of her dramatic internal strife may simply be due to recognition of Jason’s betrayal (we do, on occasions, call a simple, straightforward bad feeling “conflict”). Recall the early image of Austin calmly purloining an extra helping of bombe. Though Austin, in accordance with the analysis under discussion, assents to both “ Ψ is the best option available to me” and “the situation is Φ -demanding”, there is no sense of torturous conflict. What I am arguing is that there are two senses of “psychological conflict”, and the suggested analysis entails neither: neither

⁴⁸ The Stoics are, perhaps, largely disputing the physical separation of the soul’s faculties that Plato argued for in the *Timaeus*.

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

logical inconsistency nor phenomenological distress. How distressed the *akratēs* feels, upon assenting to two propositions of the form in question, is entirely his own decision (based, one is tempted to say, on other propositions assented to, such as how much he cares about Zeus' master-plan).

In his article *The Stoics and Akrasia*⁵⁰ Gosling argues that the unity thesis should only be taken to refer to the unity of the *hēgemonikón*. He asks:

What would it be to allow a split of the *hēgemonikón*? It could only amount to either no *hēgemonikón* or two; for it is an attempt either, say, to have *δρμή* without assent or to have two rival assented *δρμαί*, assenting to judgments of rival presentations. But in the latter case we have two rational subjects – a split Medea, one responsible for evil, one not. In fact, the resistance to splitting her *hēgemonikón* is a corollary of accepting that Medea intentionally opted for revenge.

I do not think that assenting to rival presentations entails “two rational subjects”. Imagine less *prima facie* troublesome presentations: when faced with dinner, I assent simultaneously to “there is a steak” and “there are potatoes”. Suppose these assents include impulses: simultaneously I am moved to eat the steak and am moved to eat the potatoes. Of course, something has to give – I do not sit there paralyzed like Buridan's ass. But before resolution – during that second of wavering – there are not “two rational subjects”, one herbivorous and one carnivorous; there is just one autonomous subject. The picture is simply of one thing doing two things at once (doing them freely and intentionally). I fail to see why doing two things at once entails two subjects. The sense of required “unity” of the *hēgemonikón*, which would allow Gosling to make this entailment, is left unexplained. His argument, perhaps, depends upon the notion of the *hēgemonikón* as analytically the “*ruling faculty*” – therefore, were it to issue two commands to action, only one of which was successful, then the origin of the unsuccessful command could not, *ex hypothesi*, be a *ruling faculty*. What is mistaken about this view is that we need not see the *hēgemonikón* as issuing two *commands* – rather, it issues one command (in applying an imperatival concept) and one non-practical judgment.

Third, the quoted passage from Gosling also raises the issue of *responsibility*, which I shall address quickly. If there is just one subject, who happens to assent to two propositions at once, only one of which results in action, is there a failing of responsibility? No. Medea applies the concept “infanticide-demanding” to the situation – she applies it autonomously, in that she could have refrained from doing so – action ensues (as she knows it will), for which she is morally responsible (insofar as she is ever morally responsible). The mere fact that she was simultaneously freely assenting to another

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*

proposition (*whatever* the content of that proposition) is irrelevant to the issue of responsibility for the performed action; the sufficient conditions for moral responsibility have been fulfilled.⁵¹ This much, it must be noted, is more than one can say for the Platonic model as well as the “impulse-usurpation” interpretation of the Stoics. According to the suggested sketch, nothing is being “usurped”, and the agent is never trying in vain to “retract” the consequences of a judgment. The antecedents of action are entirely within the agent’s control: she acts contrary to “reason” and “good judgment” (both understood properly) because she autonomously chooses to do so. Note also that any temptation to identify the agent’s personal identity with the *logistikón* will not trouble this model, as it will a usurpation-analysis: if Medea *is* her *logistikón*, then Medea remains responsible for the action.

The analysis that I have offered has, on occasions, flirted with the idea that there is room for some form of genuine conflict within Stoic psychology. At one point I commented that there was no principled reason why the Stoic *hēgemonikón* might not even simultaneously assent to “p” and “not-p”. Since it is unclear in exactly what sense the *hēgemonikón* is monistic, it is unclear whether such an allowance would be permissible. It did seem that if rationality entailed true autonomy, then the possibility of assenting to inconsistent propositions was unavoidable (so long as one can assent to more than one proposition at a time). I did not argue for this position, however, but moved on to show that we need not see the *akratēs* as assenting inconsistently in order to satisfy the *prima facie* requirements of akratic action. Ultimately, I believe, we can give an account of the *akratēs*’ psychology within the scope of Stoic theory, which contains minimal (if any) reference to genuine conflict. Conflict is not, I maintain, an analytically-associated aspect of our concept of *akrasia*, though nobody is denying that it is privileged in our phenomenology and ordinary language. The minimal necessary and sufficient conditions for *akrasia* are as I originally stated them: Medea is akratic if and only if she freely, knowingly, and intentionally performs an action Φ while judging that an incompatible action Ψ is the better thing to do. This, I have attempted to show, is possible to satisfy from within the system of the early Stoics.⁵²

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⁵¹ Inwood states that “an impulse is a cause within a theory which makes it possible to ascribe intentionality to human behaviour” (*op. cit.*, pp. 47-8); later (p. 99) he concludes that “on the Stoic theory rational action, assented action, human action, and responsible action emerge as coextensive terms”.

⁵² I would like to thank John Cooper for introducing me to this topic, and for his careful and useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.