

## THE MEANING(S) OF ΑΙΣΘΗΣΙΣ IN ANCIENT STOICISM

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ACCORDING TO DIOGENES LAERTIUS, the Stoics gave first place (προτάττειν) to the investigation of αἴσθησις and φαντασία.<sup>1</sup> The reason for prioritizing these two topics seems to be that in Stoic epistemology all thinking and awareness ultimately arises from particular sense experience. Knowledge is possible in so far as there exists a reliable mechanism capable of producing cognitive presentations (καταληπτικαὶ φαντασίαι).

Although both αἴσθησις and φαντασία share this primacy in the Stoic curriculum, contemporary scholars clearly express a favoritism toward the φαντασία as a philosophical subject. This should be no surprise. The φαντασία lies at the heart of most of the major controversies in Stoic epistemology and logic. As a result of this philosophical preference, αἴσθησις, the epistemological sister of the φαντασία, is frequently ignored, underemphasized, and sometimes even conflated with φαντασία. In a way, αἴσθησις is a sort of philosophical wall flower whom few notice or think attractive enough to engage in conversation. The term is customarily assumed to evoke a simple concept that requires little comment. In this article I will show that this is not the case. The meaning of the term αἴσθησις is far from simple and its relation to the all important φαντασία is more complex than ordinarily assumed. In fact, there are few terms in Stoic philosophy that have as many senses and meanings as αἴσθησις. I shall argue that the term rarely, if ever, means sensation and that philosophically there is much at stake in correctly understanding the range of meanings implied by it, especially in regards to how these various meanings relate to the φαντασία. In short, this study seeks to clarify this important and neglected<sup>2</sup> philosophical term by asking it to dance.

### I. THE PROBLEM

The terms αἴσθησις and φαντασία define and limit each other. If the domain and lexical range of one term is misidentified, the corresponding concept is likewise thrown off balance. Consider the following claim from Jeffrey Barnouw's

I would like to express my thanks to Brad Inwood, John Rist, Lloyd Gerson, and Doug Hutchinson for reading and commenting on a much earlier version of this paper.

<sup>1</sup>Diog. Laert. 7.49 = *SVF* 2.52. Kerferd (1978) takes προτάττειν to mean "prefix" or "place in front." This suggests that the study of these epistemological concepts "precede[s] the treatment of dialectic rather than form part of it" (251).

<sup>2</sup>The most thorough scholarly discussions of the role of αἴσθησις in Stoicism were written over a century ago: see Stein 1888: 133–154; Bonhöffer 1890: 122–125; Chaignet 1889 vol. 2; and Ganther 1894. There have been no comparable treatments of the subject in the twentieth century.

recent book, *Propositional Perception: Phantasia, Predication, and Sign in Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics*. He states:

The Stoics use the term *phantasia* to mean what we call “perception,” not “impression,” “presentation,” “representation” or “appearance,” let alone “imagination.” These standard translations all suggest something present to the mind which takes a further mental act in order to posit or affirm an external reality. This is the sense of the strategic Sceptic use of *phantasia*, which is directed against the Stoics (and Epicureans). But the Stoics held that the assertion of reality is intrinsic to *phantasia*. (149)

If Barnouw is correct, most of what has been written on Stoic epistemology is seriously flawed. These translations (especially “representation”) suggests a form of indirect realism. Barnouw’s position moreover does seem to have a certain degree of merit. The φαντασία frequently has content that asserts something about the external world.<sup>3</sup> There does not seem to be an additional step “to posit or affirm an external reality” (that the φαντασία also “affirms the reality” is less persuasive). Barnouw is also correct that the Sceptic argument relies on the possibility of discrepancies between a “representation” or “appearance” and the external object of perception, though Sceptics may have chosen this strategy because the Stoics did in fact subscribe to a version of indirect realism.

I have selected the Barnouw example since it effectively illustrates how a philological analysis of αἴσθησις has important philosophical consequences. I hope to demonstrate that once the conceptual and lexical range of αἴσθησις is evaluated, there will be good reason to reject Barnouw’s proposal. Translating the term φαντασία as “perception” is as problematic as, or even more so than, the competing translations (presentation, impression, etc.) since it blurs an important distinction in Stoic epistemology, namely between (a) perception as a successful apprehension of the external world and (b) the content of awareness (of any kind) whether received via the perceptual apparatus (αἰσθητικαί) or not (cf. Diog. Laert. 7.51). If Barnouw identifies the φαντασία with “perception,” what then is the role of αἴσθησις? Although acknowledging some multivocity of the term (189–190), he sees the primarily epistemological sense to be that of “sensation.”

<sup>3</sup> On a strong reading of this passage, the author seems to be saying that φαντασῖαι are intrinsically propositional or predicative regarding the external world. Hence the title of the book: *Propositional Perception*. On a weaker reading they are only *typically* propositional (a charitable reading of “intrinsic”). In either case it is useful here to distinguish between a mental state having intentional content and propositional content (both of which entail a λεκτόν in rational animals). Intentional content (or intentional states) need only be about something, namely its intentional object. Intentional objects can be real but need not be. Desiring a cup of coffee is an intentional state (coffee being the intentional object). So is desiring to climb a golden mountain. Other examples of intentional states are wishing, hoping, fearing, imagining, loving, as well as propositional states such as seeing, believing, and knowing. Propositional content suggests a belief that something is the case. See Audi 1998: 153. To limit φαντασία exclusively to propositional states and not include the wide range of intentional states is problematic given the wide variety of φαντασῖαι that the Stoics document. See Inwood 1985: 56–57 on the *phantasia hormetike*. If φαντασία applies to both, it seems unwise to translate it as “perception.” Also, see Sorabji 1990 on perceptual content.

It is the “sensing of qualities” in contrast to the apprehension of facts and events (3–4). Again, a careful analysis of the multivocity of αἴσθησις will discourage this interpretation. After analysing the surviving evidence, we shall see that there are at least eight different senses of, or perhaps more accurately, *things said of* the term αἴσθησις. These can be reduced to three basic meanings which conceptually frame or nest the concept of the φαντασία without infringing on its logical, epistemic, or experiential features. None of the meanings of αἴσθησις can be identified with any sense of the term φαντασία nor do any correspond to “sensation” as a phenomenal state or sense datum. In the final analysis, the English word “perception,” which has its own ambiguities, does not neatly map onto any single term or concept in Stoic epistemology.

## II. ΑΙΣΘΗΣΙΣ AND ΦΑΝΤΑΣΙΑ

The distinction between αἴσθησις and φαντασία is well established in pre-Stoic thought. Indeed, neglecting this distinction would be as disastrous to a correct understanding of Stoic psychology and epistemology as ignoring the distinction between the same terms in Plato or Aristotle. In Plato’s *Theaetetus* we see exactly what happens when the two concepts are conflated. In 152c Theaetetus accepts the premise that φαντασία ἄρα καὶ αἴσθησις ταὐτόν.<sup>4</sup> This admission eventually undermines his position and the argument fails. In the *Sophist* Socrates and Theaetetus seem to have learned from the discussion of the previous day and hence φαντασία is distinguished from αἴσθησις, being defined as a mixture of αἴσθησις and δόξα (263d–e). This distinction proves more productive than the previous conflation and consequently Socrates and Theaetetus are able to submit a solution to the problem of how false discourse is possible.

Aristotle, likewise, follows Plato in insisting on a clear distinction between αἴσθησις and φαντασία. He states emphatically, φαντασία γὰρ ἕτερον καὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ διανοίας.<sup>5</sup> Failing to understand how these concepts differ in Plato and Aristotle would hinder an adequate understanding of either; the same of course applies to Stoicism. It should also be noted that the very fact that both Plato and Aristotle explicitly argued that the two concepts differ suggests that there existed some level of confusion about these two concepts in ordinary Greek discourse.

<sup>4</sup>The initially accepted premise affirms the identity of αἴσθησις and φαντασία in the case of the sensation of heat and like things. Later it is expanded to include opinions and thoughts. The dialogue bears witness to the absurdity of this admission.

<sup>5</sup>Arist. *De an.* 3.3, 427b14. According to Aristotle we know that αἴσθησις and φαντασία are different because they do not always coincide and because some animals have αἴσθησις but not φαντασία: εἴτα αἴσθησις μὲν ἀεὶ πάρεστι, φαντασία δ’ οὐ. εἰ δὲ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ τὸ αὐτό, πᾶσιν ἂν ἐνδέχοιτο τοῖς θηρίοις φαντασίαν ὑπάρχειν (428a8–10). Furthermore, their epistemological credibility differ: αἰσθήσεις are always true whereas most φαντασίαι are false (428a11–12). The Stoics make a similar claim based on a very different conception of αἴσθησις and φαντασία.

That the Stoics also drew a clear distinction between αἴσθησις and φαντασία can be seen in a number of ways. First, αἴσθησις and φαντασία are treated and defined individually and sequentially in the handbook tradition.<sup>6</sup> In Diocles of Magnesia's account, preserved by Diogenes Laertius, φαντασία is defined and outlined first (7.50–51); this is followed by a discussion and definition of αἴσθησις (7.52.1–10), concluding with a brief discussion of νόησις and τὰ νοούμενα (7.52.10–53.14). The author sums up this introductory discussion by saying, τοιάδε τινὰ καὶ περὶ φαντασίας καὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ νοήσεως δογματίζουσι. In Aëtius separate sections are also devoted to the definition of αἴσθησις and αἰσθητά (4.8) and φαντασία and related concepts (4.11). In the two sections where αἴσθησις and φαντασία are treated together their differences are highlighted (4.10–11).

The concepts of αἴσθησις and φαντασία are also demarcated by the distinct epistemological range attributed to each. Again, according to Aëtius the Stoics taught that αἰσθήσεις are true, while in contrast, φαντασῖαι are both true and false.<sup>7</sup> In addition to being true we are told that every αἴσθησις is an assent,<sup>8</sup> while the φαντασία is the *object* of assent.

Finally, αἴσθησις has a wider lexical range than φαντασία. While there may be several descriptions and definitions of the φαντασία, and therefore some level of lexical ambiguity, it is clear that all the definitions are attempts to articulate a single cognitive faculty or state. However, the term αἴσθησις, as we shall see, has at least eight different senses. Each communicates important information regarding the features of at least one of three clearly distinct general meanings of the term. In other words, the multivocality of the αἴσθησις results from the fact that the same term refers to different things. With φαντασία, on the other hand, the various descriptions and definitions all refer to the same entity. The different accounts of φαντασία are for the most part strategic attempts to safeguard Stoic epistemology from philosophical objections. This is not the case with αἴσθησις.

### III. THE AMBIGUITY OF ΑΙΣΘΗΣΙΣ

The primary obstacle to understanding the Stoic theory of αἴσθησις is the fact that the word αἴσθησις is itself ambiguous. This should not be surprising:

<sup>6</sup>The evidence for our knowledge of early Stoicism is drawn from a number of sources. Fragments are direct citations of representatives of the Stoic school. Doxographical reports are testimonies reporting a Stoic view by a third party. Some of these doxographical reports are hostile or polemical, such as those of Plutarch, Sextus Empiricus, and Cicero. Other reports have survived in the form of handbooks or textbooks reporting and often comparing doctrines and opinions of various schools. Aëtius (preserved in ps.-Plutarch, Stobaeus, Nemesius, Theodoretus, *et al.*) and Diocles of Magnesia (preserved in the text of Diogenes Laertius) are the primary representatives of this form of doxographical evidence. See Mansfeld and Runia 1997.

<sup>7</sup>"The Stoics say that αἰσθήσεις are true, but regarding φαντασῖαι, some are true and some are false" (Aëtius *Placita* 4.9.4 = *SVF* 2.78). All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

<sup>8</sup>"The Stoics say that every αἴσθησις is an assent and a κατάληψις" (Aëtius 4.8.12 = *SVF* 2.72).

according to Chrysippus “every word is naturally ambiguous.”<sup>9</sup> The study and identification of ambiguity (ἀμφιβολία)<sup>10</sup> was a central component of Stoic dialectic.

In the introductory discussion in Diocles of Magnesia’s summary of Stoic philosophy we find one of our most important texts indicating the ambiguous nature of αἴσθησις:<sup>11</sup>

Αἴσθησις δὲ λέγεται κατὰ τοὺς Στωικοὺς τό τ’ ἀφ’ ἡγεμονικοῦ πνεῦμα ἐπὶ τὰς αἰσθήσεις διήκον καὶ ἡ δι’ αὐτῶν κατάληψις καὶ ἡ περὶ τὰ αἰσθητήρια κατασκευή, καθ’ ἣν τινες πηροὶ γίνονται. καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια δὲ αἴσθησις καλεῖται.<sup>12</sup>

Diocles’ report presents four distinct but related meanings of the term αἴσθησις: (1) πνεῦμα extending from the commanding faculty to the senses; (2) a κατάληψις through the senses; (3) ἡ περὶ τὰ αἰσθητήρια κατασκευή; and (4) the ἐνέργεια.<sup>13</sup> The ambiguous nature of the term is emphasized by the fact that Diocles seems unable to define the term without using it as in (1) and (2).

This, however, is not the only list emphasizing the lexical complexity of αἴσθησις in a doxographical tradition. Our second major source of information concerning the many meanings of the term comes from Aëtius. Here again the multivocity of αἴσθησις is emphasized:<sup>14</sup>

Οἱ Στωικοὶ ὀρίζονται οὕτως τὴν αἴσθησιν· αἴσθησίς ἐστιν ἀντίληψις <δι’ > αἰσθητηρίου ἢ κατάληψις. πολλαχῶς δὲ λέγεται ἡ αἴσθησις· ἡ τε γὰρ ἔξις καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἡ φαντασία ἡ καταληπτικὴ δι’ αἰσθητηρίου γίνονται καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ

<sup>9</sup> *Chrysippus ait omne verbum ambiguum natura esse, quoniam ex eodem duo vel plura accipi possunt* (Gell. *N.A.* 2.12.1). See Atherton 1993: 298–310.

<sup>10</sup> The term ἀμφιβολία is used by the Stoics in a more general sense than in Aristotle. Aristotle makes important distinctions between homonymy (ὁμωνυμία), equivocation (ἀμφιβολία), and multivocity (πολλαχῶς λέγεται). Aristotle’s view on the specific meanings of these terms is far from clear: cf. Hintikka 1973 and Irwin 1981. The Stoic understanding of ἀμφιβολία seems to have included homonymy and multivocity. In addition, whereas ἀμφιβολία in Aristotle (at least in the *De sophisticis elenchis*) is specific to an expression, the Stoics applied it to either a term or an expression. An ἀμφιβολία is a λέξις which the Stoics defined as “an articulate vocal sound” (Diog. Laert. 7.56). According to Atherton, a λέξις is any articulate sequence of letters or sounds (the two are isomorphic in Stoicism) that may or may not express anything and includes words and expressions. Atherton 1993: 136–139.

<sup>11</sup> See below for a discussion of meaning and definition in Stoicism.

<sup>12</sup> “And according to the Stoics, αἴσθησις signifies the πνεῦμα extending from the commanding faculty to the senses and the κατάληψις through them and ἡ περὶ τὰ αἰσθητήρια κατασκευή, in which some become maimed. And the ἐνέργεια is also called αἴσθησις” (Diog. Laert. 7.52 = *SVF* 2.71).

<sup>13</sup> It is essential that we leave the individual meanings of αἴσθησις untranslated for the time being. The nature of the Stoic theory of perception will be largely determined by how we understand these terms and expressions.

<sup>14</sup> A word should be said about the context of the passage. Aëtius is a collection of terse doxographical reports topically arranged. The heading for the above passage is “Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν.” See Diels 1879: 114. The Stoic position is followed by the views of Epicurus, Plato, and the Atomists (Leucippus and Democritus).

ἡγεμονικόν, \*ἀφ' οὗ πάλιν αἰσθητήρια λέγεται\* πνεύματα νοερά ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ ἐπὶ τὰ ὄργανα τεταμένα.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, this passage which seeks to sort out the ambiguities of αἰσθησις is itself ambiguous and textually problematic. The text cited above is from Diels's *Doxographi Graeci* and exhibits several interpretative judgments which may be responsible for some of the confusion between αἰσθησις and φαντασία. The first is the punctuation. There are two general strategies that editors have taken to make sense of this text. The first is to follow Diels and take φαντασία καταληπτική and "the ἡγεμονικόν itself" as two additional meanings of αἰσθησις. This can be accomplished simply by not inserting punctuation after ἐνέργεια. Later editors, however, as we shall see, insert either a semi-colon or a period here which significantly alters the meaning of the text.

There are several advantages to Diels's reading. First, the main verb, γίνονται, need not be changed (as it will be in later editions) since it would have a plural subject (namely, all the meanings of αἰσθησις). The second advantage, and perhaps the more persuasive, is that the resulting reading would offer a meaning of αἰσθησις that seems to be verified by a number of texts that the alternative reading would make little sense of. This additional meaning of αἰσθησις is "the ἡγεμονικόν itself."

There are three texts that support the idea that the term αἰσθησις could be used to signify the commanding faculty of the soul. The first comes from Cicero's *Academica priora*. Here we read: *mens enim ipsa, quae sensuum fons est atque etiam ipsa sensus est, naturalem vim habet quam intendit ad ea quibus movetur*.<sup>16</sup> Since this text portrays the Stoic position as seen through the eyes of the Academic Antiochus we should be cautious in accepting it. Antiochus, however, often does provide us with important evidence for later Stoic positions and therefore the passage may represent a genuine Stoic view. Alone this would be on shaky ground; fortunately similar claims can be found in other sources.

The Cicero passage bears an interesting similarity to our second text, Seneca's *Epistulae morales* 113.23. In this text Cleanthes and Chrysippus reportedly disagree regarding the definition of walking: Cleanthes argued that walking is *spiritum ... a principali usque in pedes permissum* whereas Chrysippus declared

<sup>15</sup> Aëtius 4.8.1 = ps.-Plut. 899d1-7 (= *SVF* 2.850). The text cited here is Diels's (1879: 393-394). There are several difficulties in the text, the most serious of which Diels flags with asterisks. I will argue below (326) that Mau's and Lachenaud's edition of this text resolves these difficulties in a more coherent manner than the readings proposed by Diels, Meineke, or von Arnim.

<sup>16</sup> "For the mind itself, which is the fount of the senses and even sense itself, possesses a natural force that stretches to those things by which it is moved" (*Acad. pr.* 2.30). The term *mens* is probably a translation of διάνοια, which is repeatedly identified with the commanding faculty: βούλονται δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐν ἡμῖν ψυχὴν ζῶον εἶναι· ζῆν τε γὰρ καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι· καὶ μάλιστα τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν μέρος αὐτῆς, ὃ δὴ καλεῖται διάνοια (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.65.1-3 = *SVF* 3.306). Also see *SVF* 1.202, 2.840, and 3.305.

that it is *ipsum principale*.<sup>17</sup> Whereas the claim reported in the Cicero passage merits caution since it is attributed to Antiochus' vision of Stoicism, which does not always correspond to the early Stoic views, the Seneca passage is assigned to Chrysippus and thus cannot be so easily dismissed. If walking can be identified as the commanding faculty itself, it would not be out of place to make the same claim regarding αἴσθησις.<sup>18</sup>

The third text in support of Diels's reading comes from Arius Didymus. Comparing individual souls to the world soul Arius Didymus states:

ἔνιοι δὲ τὴν μὲν τοῦ ὅλου αἰδίον, τὰς δὲ λοιπὰς συμμίγνυσθαι ἐπὶ τελευτῇ εἰς ἐκείνην. ἔχειν δὲ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἡγεμονικόν τι ἐν αὐτῇ, ὃ δὴ ζωὴ καὶ αἴσθησις ἐστὶ καὶ ὁρμή.<sup>19</sup>

It seems clear that there is some sense in which αἴσθησις can be identified with the ἡγεμονικόν. However, this is a rather weak identification. The point of all these passages seems to be that the commanding faculty is responsible for αἴσθησις as it is for life and impulse. We may assume then that for the Stoics αἴσθησις signifies the ἡγεμονικόν itself to the same degree that life, impulse, or even walking can be identified with the commanding faculty of the soul. Nevertheless, the fact that these texts state this rather odd identification supports Diels's edition of Aëtius.

There are nonetheless several drawbacks to Diels's text of Aëtius. First, although there may be passages that can be used to identify (at some level) αἴσθησις with the ἡγεμονικόν, it is not so easy to find a text or argument that would identify αἴσθησις with the καταληπτικὴ φαντασία. An αἴσθησις is a κατάληψις, but a κατάληψις is not the same as a καταληπτικὴ φαντασία. Rather, a κατάληψις is an assent to a καταληπτικὴ φαντασία just as αἴσθησις is an assent to an αἰσθητικὴ φαντασία. The absence of any text supporting the identification of αἴσθησις with καταληπτικὴ φαντασία weighs against this reading.

Secondly, Diels's reading fails to resolve the fundamental difficulty in the text. Even after his correction Diels is still forced to "dagger" the text and state: *nam plane obscurum est quid post ἂφ' οὗ interciderit* (55). Moreover, Diels's text is awkward, more so than the alternative readings by von Arnim, Mau, or

<sup>17</sup>"Cleanthes and his pupil Chrysippus did not agree on what walking is. Cleanthes said it was breath extending from the commanding faculty to the feet, Chrysippus that it was the commanding faculty itself" (Sen. *Epist. mor.* 113.23; Long and Sedley 1987: tr. 53L).

<sup>18</sup>See previous note. Also cf. Aëtius 4.23.1 = *SVF* 2.854.

<sup>19</sup>"But some [say] that the [soul] of the whole is eternal, but the rest [of the souls] are mixed at the end with the former. And every soul has a commanding faculty in itself, which is life, αἴσθησις, and impulse" (Euseb. *Praep. ev.* 15.20.5; *DDG* fr. 39, p. 471 = *SVF* 2.821). Also cf. *Scholia in Lucianum Vit. auct.* 21.127: ἔλεγον δὲ τῶν καταληπτικῶν τὰς διὰ τῶν αἰσθητήριων αἰσθητικὰς καὶ τὰς μὲν ταῖς αἰσθητικαῖς συγκαταθέσει γινομένης αἰσθήσεις, τὰς δὲ ταῖς καταληπτικαῖς κατάληψεις, λέγεσθαι δὲ αἴσθησιν καὶ κατ' ἄλλον τρόπον τὸ τε αἰσθητήριον καὶ τὸ ἡγεμονικόν καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ καθάπερ αἴσθητοῦ κατάληψιν (*FDS* 332a).

Lachenaud. Aëtius is usually known for his clear and concise style; his sentences are usually brief and the syntax simple. Diel's text is anything but that.

The alternative to Diels is to place a break in the text. Mau and Lachenaud place a period and von Arnim a semi-colon after ἐνέργεια suggesting that the list of the meanings of αἴσθησις ends there. I argue that Mau and Lachenaud (both reconstruct the text identically) offer the most coherent reading of this text:

Οἱ Στωικοὶ ὀρίζονται οὕτως τὴν αἴσθησιν· “αἴσθησις ἐστὶν ἀντίληψις <δι’> αἰσθητηρίου ἢ κατάληψις.” πολλαχῶς δὲ λέγεται ἡ αἴσθησις· ἡ τε γὰρ ἔξις καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια. καὶ ἡ φαντασία ἡ καταληπτικὴ δι’ αἰσθητηρίου γίνεται κατὰ τὸ ἡγεμονικόν. ἀφ’ οὗ [συνίσταται] πάλιν [δ’] αἰσθητήρια λέγεται πνεύματα νοερά ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ ἐπὶ τὰ ὄργανα τεταμένα.<sup>20</sup>

The text emended in this way has the following sense: αἴσθησις is an apprehension or cognition through an αἰσθητήριον; αἴσθησις has many meanings, (ἔξις, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια). The φαντασία καταληπτικὴ also arises through an αἰσθητήριον. The text then proceeds to define αἰσθητήρια. The progression reads naturally and is grammatically plausible. Following the Mau/Lachenaud correction and punctuation we then have an obvious structural similarity between the Diocles text and the Aëtius text. In the Diocles text, after αἴσθησις is defined as an ἐνέργεια, the passage continues: ἡ δὲ κατάληψις γίνεται κατ’ αὐτοὺς αἰσθήσει. Similarly, in Aëtius αἴσθησις is also identified with ἐνέργεια, and immediately following the author adds, καὶ ἡ φαντασία ἡ καταληπτικὴ δι’ αἰσθητηρίου γίνεται.

There are, however, also a number of drawbacks with this strategy. First, by adding a full stop, the editors are forced to change the γίνονται to γίνεται in order to agree with its presumed singular subject. Secondly, the text still encounters trouble with the ἀφ’ οὗ. Mau and Lachenaud suggest inserting συνίσταται after ἀφ’ οὗ. However, a coherent sense and translation is possible without further emendation to the text if we allow ἀφ’ οὗ to be translated somewhat atypically as “for this reason.”<sup>21</sup> This is how von Arnim seems to read the text since he does not see the necessity of inserting συνίσταται (2.850). If this concession is granted, a coherent reading can be found with very little emendation:

The Stoics define αἴσθησις in the following manner: αἴσθησις is an apprehension or cognition through an αἰσθητήριον. And αἴσθησις has several meanings: [It refers to] the ἔξις, the δύναμις, and the ἐνέργεια. Moreover the cognitive presentation is produced in the commanding faculty by means of an αἰσθητήριον. On account of this, [the term] αἰσθητήρια refers to intelligent breath stretching from the commanding faculty to the organs.

<sup>20</sup>Mau 1971: 119. All future references to ps.-Plutarch will refer to Mau's excellent edition which is identical in this passage to Lachenaud's.

<sup>21</sup>According to LSJ (1968: 192), ἀπό is frequently used to indicate cause or origin; cf. Smyth 1920: 374, “by reason of.”



For these reasons I suggest that we adopt either the von Arnim or Mau/Lachenaud texts (the difference is negligible) of the Aëtius 4.8. This means that the ἡγεμονικόν itself and the φαντασία καταληπτική will not be taken as meanings of αἴσθησις on the basis of the Aëtius text. Moreover, since the other evidence suggested a very weak and nonspecific identification with αἴσθησις, I will not include the ἡγεμονικόν itself as one of the meanings of the term. Finally, by rejecting Diel's reading we are less likely to conflate αἴσθησις with φαντασία since there now exists no text which identifies αἴσθησις with a φαντασία of any kind.

#### IV. THE MULTIVOCITY OF ΑΙΣΘΗΣΙΣ

With the task of isolating and evaluating the main texts about the ambiguity of the term αἴσθησις behind us, we are now ready to examine the individual definitions. Our two main texts emphasizing the multivocality of αἴσθησις (*Diog. Laert.* 7.52 and *Aëtius* 4.8) possess both notable similarities and differences. Both passages acknowledge that the term αἴσθησις has several meanings. For clarity we shall summarize the meanings as follows:

Diocles of Magnesia	Aëtius (ps.-Plutarch)
τό πνεῦμα διήκον	ἀντίληψις δι' αἰσθητηρίου ἢ κατάληψις
κατάληψις	ἕξις
ἢ περὶ τὰ αἰσθητήρια κατασκευή	δύναμις
ἐνέργεια	ἐνέργεια

Only two meanings are explicitly found in both lists: κατάληψις and ἐνέργεια. There is also a similarity between Diocles' first meaning of αἴσθησις and the definition of αἰσθητήριον which immediately follows Aëtius' definition. The similarities, however, seem to end here.

One notable difference between these two accounts is that Aëtius seems to make a distinction between the first listed meaning and other senses of the term. The doxographer begins by saying that the Stoics "defined" (ὀρίζονται) the term αἴσθησις as ἀντίληψις δι' αἰσθητηρίου ἢ κατάληψις, then immediately states that the term can be said in many ways (πολλαχῶς δὲ λέγεται ἡ αἴσθησις). It is possible to infer from this that the first expression is the primary definition and that the latter terms are secondary senses. In that case, we would still have four meanings of the term in the passage, though the first would have some sort of special status or possibly be its "focal meaning."<sup>22</sup> An alternative way to

<sup>22</sup> Owen (1960) describes what he means by focal meaning: "A word such as 'medical,' he [Aristotle] says, is not univocal—it has various definitions answering to its various senses, but one of these senses is primary, in that its definition reappears as a component in each of the other definitions. If to be a medical man is to be XY, to be a medical knife is to be of the sort used by a man who is XY" (169).

understand this text is that there is but one definition of the term, and the latter senses are the three ways in which the term can be applied. I argue that neither of these options is a satisfactory explanation.

First, it is unlikely that the Stoics held that one of the meanings of αἵσθησις is prior in any way to the others; this may have been how Aëtius understood the matter, but such would be inconsistent with the Stoic view of ambiguity. There is simply no evidence that the Stoics distinguished between primary and secondary meanings in an ambiguity. Indeed, Catherine Atherton argues that the Stoics had no concept corresponding to Aristotle's notion of "focal meaning."<sup>23</sup> Secondly, the first meaning in the Aëtius passage, κατάληψις (and ἀντίληψις), does not have the same privileged status in Diocles' definition where the four meanings of αἵσθησις are treated as equals.

Why then is the first meaning of αἵσθησις in Aëtius set apart from the following meanings? It may be because Aëtius' first meaning more closely resembles the form of a definition or a complete definition than the subsequent meanings. The fact that the Diogenes Laertius text presents four meanings of the term αἵσθησις in a different order and without priority being given to any particular meaning supports this conclusion.

Little detail survives on the Stoic theory of definition.<sup>24</sup> Although we know that the Stoics were notorious for coining new words, identifying ambiguities, and refining definitions, there is very little evidence concerning the specific criterion of a good definition. Chrysippus defined a definition (ὅρος) as "rendering back what is distinctive" to a term (ἰδίου ἀπόδοσις).<sup>25</sup> Antipater offers a different definition of ὅρος: a definition is "an account stated comprehensively for the purpose of an analysis" (λόγος κατ' ἀνάλυσιν ἀπαρτιζόντως ἐκφερόμενος).<sup>26</sup> Neither definition is particularly helpful. In fact, Chrysippus' definition of ὅρος would probably not be considered a definition by Antipater's standards. It does not appear to be sufficiently comprehensive (ἀπαρτιζόντως). The rendering back of something distinctive or special can refer to things other than a definition. Nevertheless, either of these definitions of ὅρος could justify Aëtius' distinction between the former and latter meanings of αἵσθησις. For Aëtius' first definition of αἵσθησις is both a better ἰδίου ἀπόδοσις and is stated more ἀπαρτιζόντως than the latter meanings.

The Stoics also made use of abbreviated definitions (ὕπογραφαί). The abbreviated definition is defined as "an account that introduces the πράγματα in

<sup>23</sup> Atherton 1993: 103: "Nor is it strange that they [the Stoics] do not report the kind of sifting of the philosophical tradition, using ambiguity (or something like it) as one of the tools of analysis, which is a distinctively Aristotelian method. It is rather the almost complete absence from what is known of Stoic theorizing of any interest even in formulating rules as to how significations of ambiguous terms may be systematically interrelated . . . which is so striking."

<sup>24</sup> See Rieth 1933: 36–54. Cf. Atherton 1993: 92–128.

<sup>25</sup> *Schol. in Dionys. Thrac.* 107.1–21; Hilgard (ed.) (= *SVF* 226.1)

<sup>26</sup> *Diog. Laert.* 7.60 (*SVF* 2.226.2)

outline form or a definition supplying the force of the [complete] definition in a simpler form.”<sup>27</sup> It is quite possible that several of the definitions that we have been examining are in fact ὑπογραφαί.

A definition, full or abbreviated, is not the only way to disambiguate a term or expression. Other common methods for showing different applications of an ambiguous term are division (διαίρεσις) and partition (μερισμός). These consist of dividing or classifying a term according to genus and species.<sup>28</sup> Although διαίρεσις and μερισμός were commonly used by Stoics, the passages which we are examining are clearly not instances of either.

The final way to shed light on an ambiguous term is simply to cite instances of the various meanings of the term. Sextus Empiricus gives an example of this using the word “dog.”<sup>29</sup> He states that the word may signify a barking animal, the marine animal (sea lion), the dog star, and the Cynic philosopher. He states that these are cases or instances (πτώσεις) of signification. Sextus also says that these have “nothing in common,” which is surely false. There is no evidence that the Stoics ever used the word πτώσις in this sense. However, the practice of citing instances of a term to clarify an ambiguity is a very common way to indicate the meaning of a term. This is precisely what Socrates objected to in Plato’s *Meno*.<sup>30</sup> Citing the denotations of a term is no substitute for a definition. It is, however, all that is required to take the sting out of an ambiguity.

I suggest that our chief texts on the meanings of αἴσθησις include definitions and/or abbreviated definitions (such as αἰσθησίς ἐστιν ἀντίληψις <δι’> αἰσθητηρίου ἢ κατάληψις) as well as instances of the denotation of the word (πολλαχῶς δὲ λέγεται ἡ αἴσθησις· ἡ τε γὰρ ἕξις καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια). This explains Aëtius’ distinction between ὀρίζονται and πολλαχῶς λέγεται. Maintaining a rigid distinction between definitions, abbreviated definitions, meanings, and instances of the term would require continual qualification and would accomplish little. I will continue, therefore, to refer to these texts as the various senses, meanings, or even definitions of the term without implying that they are definitions in any strict sense.

There is one final meaning of αἴσθησις that needs to be mentioned before concluding this section. I refer to the claim that an αἴσθησις is an assent (συγκατάθεσις). This assertion is found in several texts.<sup>31</sup> Keeping this in mind, we can now produce a list of the various meanings of αἴσθησις. If all of these meanings are collected together, removing duplications and excluding the

<sup>27</sup> ὑπογραφή δέ ἐστι λόγος τυπωδῶς εἰσάγων εἰς τὰ πράγματα, ἢ ὅρος ἀπλούστερον τὴν τοῦ ὅρου δύναμιν προσενηνεγμένος (Diog. Laert. 7.60).

<sup>28</sup> See Ierodiakonou 1993: 61–68.

<sup>29</sup> Sextus Empiricus *Math.* 11.28–29.

<sup>30</sup> Plato 72a6–8. Cf. Grim 1962: 7–9.

<sup>31</sup> Stob. *Ecl.* 1.474.18–19 = *SVF* 2.72; Cic. *Acad. pr.* 2.108 = *SVF* 2.73; Porph. *De Anima* 2.349 in Stob. *Ecl.* 1.349.25–26 = *SVF* 2.74.

ἡγεμονικόν itself, we have the following list of meanings or uses of the term αἴσθησις:<sup>32</sup>

1. an extending πνεῦμα
2. ἡ περὶ τὰ αἰσθητήρια κατασκευή
3. ἐνέργεια
4. ἔξις
5. δύναμις
6. κατάληψις through the senses
7. ἀντίληψις through the senses
8. συγκατάθεσις

In the remainder of this article I shall show how αἴσθησις can mean so many things and still be a useful philosophical term. We shall see that these eight items can be reduced to three general categories, that both Aëtius' and Diocles' definitions contain all three components, and that any comprehensive account of the meaning of αἴσθησις must include all three. The three general meanings of the term αἴσθησις are: (1) the sensory apparatus; (2) the activity of the apparatus; (3) the culminating (successful) cognitive event identified as the assent to a certain kind of φαντασία.

#### V. THE MEANINGS OF THE MEANINGS

The first three meanings on the list emphasize different features of the physical apparatus of perception. That the term αἴσθησις signifies an extending portion of πνεῦμα is confirmed by Chrysippus' definitions of the individual senses in his *De anima*. He states that each of the five senses is πνεῦμα extending from the commanding faculty to the organ of perception. Hence vision, also called the optical αἴσθησις, is the πνεῦμα extending from the commanding faculty to the eyes; hearing, the πνεῦμα extending from the commanding faculty to the ears; and so on.<sup>33</sup>

Chrysippus' definition of the individual senses is also clearly related to the expression ἡ περὶ τὰ αἰσθητήρια κατασκευή. This expression, however, emphasizes not the πνεῦμα *between* the commanding faculty and the organs but the remote structures themselves. Scholars have translated this passage in various ways: Hicks translates the expression as "the apparatus of the sense organs,"<sup>34</sup> Long and Sedley as "their [the instruments of cognition] surrounding structure,"<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Bonhöffer (1890: 122), as a result of working from Diels's text, identifies six meanings for αἴσθησις: ἔξις, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, φαντασία καταληπτική καὶ αἰσθητική, ἡγεμονικόν itself, and πνεῦμα νοερόν.

<sup>33</sup>Gal. *PHP* 3.1.10–15 = *SVF* 2.885. Chrysippus uses the term ὄψις in place of Aëtius' ὄρασις. Otherwise the definitions are identical in substance. See Aëtius 4.21.1–4 = *SVF* 2.836.

<sup>34</sup>Hicks 1925: 161.

<sup>35</sup>Long and Sedley 1987: 248.

Inwood and Gerson as “the equipment of the sense-organs,”<sup>36</sup> and Annas as “the make-up of the sense-organs.”<sup>37</sup> One cannot rule out any of the above translations on lexical grounds alone; for the term κατασκευή can signify apparatus, structure, equipment, or make-up. The word κατασκευή is a general term for equipment or gear. In Thucydides it is used to signify military and domestic implements (1.97.25, 8.5.2) and suggests the sense of readiness. It can also mean a structure or state of something that accounts for its readiness or preparation (Diog. Laert. 7.108). Aristotle uses the term for public buildings (*Eth. Nic.* 4.11, 1122b20). Tools, weapons, and buildings are all structures or objects ready to be used. Calcidius compares the sensory apparatus to the threads of a spider’s web and the commanding faculty to the spider who sits in the center with a leg on each thread. The thread, tensed and sensitive to any disturbance, lies in readiness.<sup>38</sup>

The preposition περί used with the accusative case may signify either a general relation (“of” or “relating to”) or location (“surrounding” or “in the general vicinity of”). Some Stoics described the location of the commanding faculty of the soul in the πνεῦμα “around the heart” (περὶ τὴν καρδίαν).<sup>39</sup> Elsewhere sleep is described as a loosening of the sensory tension “around the commanding faculty” (τὸν δὲ ὕπνον γίνεσθαι ἐκλυομένου τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ τόνου περὶ τὸ ἡγεμονικόν).<sup>40</sup>

Diocles qualified the expression by adding the statement, καθ’ ἣν τινες πηροὶ γίνονται. The phrase “in respect to which some become maimed” suggests that the expression as a whole is referring to the external or remote elements of the sensory apparatus through which external information enters the body, in contrast to the πνεῦμα extending through the body from the commanding faculty which transmits the information. Nor should we be surprised by the fact that the Stoics used αἴσθησις in this way. Aristotle also referred to the distal structures of sense perception as the αἰσθήσεις.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, we may conclude that αἴσθησις, in so far as it is identified as ἡ περὶ τὰ αἰσθητήρια κατασκευή, emphasizes the structure and readiness of the part of the sensory apparatus that interfaces with the external world.

The second basic class of meanings for αἴσθησις is the activity of the apparatus that produces the φαντασία. Aëtius’ claim that αἴσθησις is an ἐνέργεια, ἔξις, and δύναμις seems to point not to the physical structure of the apparatus but rather to its activity or operational features. All three terms were also technical terms used by Aristotle. Might Aëtius be using these terms in an

<sup>36</sup>Inwood and Gerson 1997: 113.

<sup>37</sup>Annas 1992: 71.

<sup>38</sup>Calcidius *Ad Timaeum* 220 = *SVF* 2.879. Likewise, the external sense-organs are structures of the body that await in readiness to be used in conjunction with the extending πνεῦμα.

<sup>39</sup>Aëtius 4.5.6 = *SVF* 2.838.

<sup>40</sup>Diog. Laert. 7.158 = *SVF* 2.766.

<sup>41</sup>Cf. Arist. *De an.* 3.1 425a10.

Aristotelian sense? This is unlikely.<sup>42</sup> The Aristotelian sense of ἐνέργεια and δύναμις as actuality/potentiality is completely foreign to the Stoic approach to physics, ontology, and psychology. In Aristotle's theory of sense perception the sense-organs are not just faculties (that is, something capable of acting) but also true potentialities.<sup>43</sup> By "true potentialities" I mean that they are constituted of substances which in themselves are potentially the form of the sense object without the matter.

It is more likely that δύναμις and ἐνέργεια have the less technical meanings of faculty and the exercise of the faculty. These are the ordinary uses of the terms and the most reasonable way to read the Aëtius passage.<sup>44</sup> This ordinary usage of ἐνέργεια can also be naturally contrasted with δύναμις, as can be seen by Galen's usage of these two terms in *De naturalibus facultatibus*: ἐνέργειαν δὲ τὴν δραστηκὴν ὀνομάζω κίνησιν καὶ τὴν ταύτης αἰτίαν δύναμιν.<sup>45</sup> Here the relationship between ἐνέργεια and δύναμις is described in terms of motion and cause. If we read the Aëtius text in this non-Aristotelian sense, αἴσθησις is both the process or motion that occurs in the act of perception as well as that which makes the activity possible, namely, the power intrinsic to the sensory apparatus.

It is clear then that these two terms capture operative features of the Stoic theory. According to Calcidius, Stoics compared the perceptual acquisition to a king who sends out messengers who report back after receiving information. This analogy simultaneously describes the sensory apparatus and the activity of the apparatus (as did Chrysippus' definition of the individual senses). In a related analogy previously mentioned, the sensory apparatus was compared to a spider sitting on a web waiting for an insect. In both cases the apparatus has a δύναμις in so far as it has a capacity to receive information and transmit it to the commanding faculty. The stimulation provokes a response in the apparatus and this response,

<sup>42</sup>Both Rist (1969) and Menn (1994) agree that ἐνέργεια in its earliest appearances in Aristotle simply meant activity. It is probably this vague sense (which is not unique to Aristotle) to which Aëtius refers. I am arguing above the weaker claim that the term ἐνέργεια in the Aëtius text should not be confused with Aristotle's technical sense of actuality or ἐντελέχεια. Cf. Polansky 1992: 214, arguing that "ἐνέργεια everywhere should receive the same translation, preferably 'actuality'." Blair (1995: 579) concludes the exact opposite: "If my view is correct, the ἐνέργεια does not mean and never meant 'actuality,' but it means just what those who used it after Aristotle thought it meant, '(internal) activity'." See Sandbach 1985 on the problem of the influence of Aristotle on the early Stoics.

<sup>43</sup>"τὸ δ' αἰσθητικὸν δυνάμει ἐστὶν οἷον τὸ αἰσθητὸν ἤδη ἐντελεχεία, καθάπερ εἴρηται. πάσχει μὲν οὖν οὐχ ὅμοιον ὄν, πεπονθὸς δ' ὁμοίωται καὶ ἔστιν οἷον ἐκεῖνο" (Arist. *De an.* 2.5, 418a 3–6).

<sup>44</sup>Bonhöffer (1890: 123–124) argues that there are two senses of ἐνέργεια: "die αἴσθησις ist in doppeltem Sinn eine Thätigkeit des Hegemonikon, erstens als Akt der einfachen Sinnesauffassung, welche, wenn sie durch nichts gehindert war, einen getreuen Abdruck (τύπωσις) des Objektes, d. h. eine φαντασία καταληπτική im Hegemonikon hervorbringt; zweitens als Akt der Zustimmung zu dieser durch die Sinnesauffassung gewirkten kateleptischen Vorstellung." The first sense deals with sensory contact, transmission, and reception. Bonhöffer's second sense is the commanding faculty's response to the φαντασία.

<sup>45</sup>"Now ἐνέργεια is the name I give to the active change or motion and the cause of this I call a δύναμις" (*De nat. fac.* 1.2.7).

I suggest, is the ἐνέργεια. Plotinus describes this ἐνέργεια as the transmission through the body. Thus the capacity to see (the faculty of sight) will be the condition or cause that enables sight (i.e., πνεῦμα and the sense-organs); the activity of seeing would be the motion of the πνεῦμα. According to Aëtius: οἱ Στωικοὶ πάντα τὰ αἷτια σωματικά· πνεύματα γάρ.<sup>46</sup> Thus there is a clear sense in which the apparatus of sense perception can be said to be the capacity or power to perceive since it is the cause and necessary condition for the activity.

Αἴσθησις as a δύναμις refers to the power of the πνεῦμα of the commanding faculty that pervades the body and the external senses. The idea of a faculty or capacity (δύναμις) can also be seen in the Diogenes Laertius passage in the phrase ἡ περὶ τὰ αἰσθητήρια κατασκευὴ discussed above.<sup>47</sup> A κατασκευὴ is an implement ready to be used, and is thus a capacity. The activity or ἐνέργεια would be the term used for the sensory apparatus in the process of functioning or transmitting. Therefore, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια remain complementary concepts in the Stoic sense as they are in Aristotle.

In addition to being the exercise of a capacity that detects and transmits information, αἴσθησις is an activity in two additional ways which help us see its relation to the φαντασία. (1) Αἴσθησις is the activity of the apparatus that imprints the information on the commanding faculty (or “alters” the commanding faculty) thereby producing the φαντασία; and (2) αἴσθησις is an activity in so far as it is an assent and therefore a response to the φαντασία. In both cases the φαντασία is an object (the object produced and the intentional object of the assent) and has a passive nature in contrast to the active/motive nature of αἴσθησις.

This contrast between αἴσθησις as an activity and the essentially passive nature of the φαντασία as an object becomes evident if we examine the descriptions or definitions of φαντασία. Zeno reportedly called the φαντασία an imprint (τύπωσις) in the soul, whereas Cleanthes reportedly held that the imprint entailed a literal, pictorial representation like the imprint that a signet ring makes in wax with all the contours of the external object. Cicero emphasizes the passivity of the φαντασία by stressing its formation by means of an external impact (*impulsione*, *Acad. post.* 11.40). Chrysippus preferred to call the φαντασία an affection (πάθος)<sup>48</sup> or alteration (ἑτεροίωσις or ἀλλοίωσις)<sup>49</sup> in the commanding faculty. According to Sextus, the Stoics distinguished the φαντασία from other, more

<sup>46</sup>“The Stoics say that all causes are corporeal; for they are πνεύματα” (Aëtius 1.2.5; *SVF* 2.340).

<sup>47</sup>Diog. Laert. 7.52. Cf. Calcidius’ *instruendo sensibus* (Calcidius *Ad Timaeum* 220, 232.21–233.3; *SVF* 2.879).

<sup>48</sup>Aëtius 4.12 = *SVF* 2.54. Pohlenz (1970: 1.55) declares that αἴσθησις, like φαντασία, is an affection of the soul. This, I shall argue, is false. The term αἴσθησις is never called an affection in either of the Stoic definitions or elsewhere in the surviving evidence. Claims such as this have led to the misconception that the relationship between αἴσθησις and φαντασία is similar to that between sensation and perception in English.

<sup>49</sup>Chrysippus is reported to have been dissatisfied with the literal image of the stamping analogy and proposed the less literal “alteration.” The evidence conflicts whether the term which Chrysippus

active alterations of the soul such as cognition, impulse, and assent, by qualifying the alteration with the expression “by way of passivity” (τὸ κατὰ πείσιν, *Math.* 7.239). Hence, the φαντασία is also described as a state (διάθεσις) and a passivity (πείσιν). This passivity of the φαντασία stands in clear contrast to αἴσθησις as an activity.

The relation and the inseparability of activity/passivity plays an important role in Stoicism. Just as God and matter are conceptually distinct yet never separate, so αἴσθησις and φαντασία are mutually dependent. The parallel is limited though; whereas every αἴσθησις produces a φαντασία, not every φαντασία comes *directly* from an αἴσθησις. Φαντασῖαι may also be produced by the mind, drawing on concepts and memories of former φαντασῖαι.<sup>50</sup> Whether the φαντασία is produced/imprinted/alterd by the αἴσθησις or by the mind (διάνοια) or reason (λόγος), it is the passive effect or the resulting state (διάθεσις).

Δύναμις and ἐνέργεια are joined by a third term: ἔξις. Since we have seen that the φαντασία is a διάθεσις, we should not be surprised to see αἴσθησις as a ἔξις. However, we need to be careful not to confuse the Stoic use of these terms with Aristotle's. According to Aristotle a ἔξις is a kind of quality, namely an enduring state.<sup>51</sup> Aristotle adds that a ἔξις differs from a διάθεσις in that the latter is more transient and less stable. Examples of ἔξις for Aristotle are knowledge and virtues, whereas examples of διάθεσις are heat, cold, or the extension of one's arm. It seems that if Aëtius wanted to use an Aristotelian term for αἴσθησις as a perceptual state he might have been better advised to choose the term διάθεσις; for an αἴσθησις is immediate and transient.<sup>52</sup>

The identification of αἴσθησις as a ἔξις becomes clear if we understand the term as the Stoics used it. According to Simplicius, the Stoics distinguished ἔξις and διάθεσις on different grounds than Aristotle:

ἄξιον δὲ καὶ τὴν Στωικῶν συνήθειαν πάντων περὶ τὰ ὀνόματα ταῦτα καταμαθεῖν. δοκοῦσι γὰρ οὗτοί τισιν ἀνάπαλιν τῷ Ἀριστοτέλει τὴν διάθεσιν τῆς ἔξεως μονιμωτέραν ἡγεῖσθαι.<sup>53</sup>

used was ἐτεροίωσις or ἀλλοίωσις. Sextus attributes both to Chrysippus: ἐτεροίωσις in *Math.* 7.230 and 372, and ἀλλοίωσις in *Math.* 7.400. Diogenes Laertius (7.50) uses the term ἀλλοίωσις.

<sup>50</sup>Diog. Laert. 7.51–52. Ultimately all φαντασῖαι are dependent upon the activity of αἴσθησις. Sensory (αἰσθητικαὶ) φαντασῖαι are directly dependent, non-sensory φαντασῖαι are indirectly dependent. Cf. Aëtius 4.11.1–4 = *SVF* 2.83.

<sup>51</sup>Arist. *Cat.* 8.9a–14; cf. *Metaph.* 5.20, 1022b4–14.

<sup>52</sup>That the Stoics held that sensory experience was immediate and transient can be seen in Calcidius: “each sense perceives some one ingredient in the composition; this one color; another, sound; and while that one discerns the flavor of fluids, this one by touch distinguishes roughness and smoothness. And all this is concerned with what is present; for no sense remembers what is past or apprehends what is future” (Calcidius *Ad Timaeum* 220 = *SVF* 2.879). In fact, Aristotle never calls (to my knowledge) αἴσθησις a ἔξις, though he does call memory (*Mem.* 450a30, 451a16–27, 451b3) and bodily conditions (*Resp.* 474a26, 477b15–18, 478a1) ἔξεις.

<sup>53</sup>“It is worthwhile to understand the Stoic's usage in regards to these terms. In the opinion of some people, they reverse Aristotle by taking character [διάθεσις] to be more stable than tenor [ἔξις]” (Simpl. *In. Aristot. Cat.* 237.25–27 = *SVF* 2.393; Long and Sedley 1987: trans. 47S). Simplicius also



He claims that the use of *ἐξίς* over *διάθεσις* is determined not on the basis of the enduring character of the state as Aristotle proposes in the *Categories*, but instead, on the basis of whether the state can be intensified (*ἐπιτείνεσθαι*) and relaxed (*ἀνέσθαι*):

τὸ δὲ ἀφορμὴν μὲν ἔχει τῆς τοιαύτης ὑπονοίας, οὐ μὲντοι κατὰ τὸ μονιμώτερον ἢ μὴ παρὰ τοῖς Στωικοῖς ἢ τούτων εἴληπται διαφορά, ἀλλὰ κατ' ἄλλας διαθέσεις· καὶ γὰρ τὰς μὲν ἔξεις ἐπιτείνεσθαι φασιν δύνασθαι καὶ ἀνέσθαι, τὰς δὲ διαθέσεις ἀνεπιτάτους εἶναι καὶ ἀνανέτους.<sup>54</sup>

Simplicius then gives two examples of what the Stoics mean by a *διάθεσις* (in contrast to Aristotle): straightness and virtue.<sup>55</sup> According to the Stoics something is either straight or it is non-straight (crooked) and a person is either virtuous or he is non-virtuous (base).<sup>56</sup> Thus virtue cannot be a *ἐξίς* because there cannot be degrees of virtue.<sup>57</sup> If a virtue is relaxed, it is no longer a virtue; thus virtue is a *διάθεσις*. Simplicius, on the other hand, gives expertise (*τέχνη*) and health as examples of *ἐξίς*. Both can be intensified and relaxed, which is the characteristic activity of a *ἐξίς*.<sup>58</sup> Other examples of the Stoic use of *ἐξίς* (in other texts) are knowledge, geometry, pursuits (*ἐπιτηδεύματα*), a physical object characterized by cohesion, and nature itself.<sup>59</sup>

Do these other examples of *ἐξίς* give us any idea of how *αἴσθησις* might be a *ἐξίς* in the Stoic sense? Let us look at these *ἐξίς* more carefully. Geometry can probably be reclassified either as a form or branch of knowledge, a pursuit, or a *τέχνη*; in fact, Stobaeus gives “the love of geometry” (*φιλογεωμετρίαν*) as one of his examples of a pursuit; elsewhere we find the geometer offered as an example of someone who possess a *τέχνη*.<sup>60</sup> This shows us that knowledge, *τέχνη*, and pursuits are closely connected.

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distinguishes *ἐξίς* and *σχέσις* in the same passage (not cited). See Rieth 1933: 120–127 and Elorduy 1936: 113–116.

<sup>54</sup>“What gives rise to such an opinion is not, however, a difference between these terms in virtue of differing stability, in Stoic doctrine, but a difference over characters. For they say that tenor [*ἐξίς*] can be intensified or relaxed, but characters [*διαθέσεις*] are not susceptible to intensification or relaxation” (Simpl. *In. Aristot. Cat.* 237.27–31 = *SVF* 2.393; Long and Sedley 1987: tr. 47S).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.70.21–71.6 = *SVF* 3.104, and Diog. Laert. 7.98 = *SVF* 3.105.

<sup>56</sup> See Diog. Laert. 7.127 = *SVF* 3.536: Ἀρέσκει δ' αὐτοῖς μὴδὲν μεταξὺ εἶναι ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας, τῶν Περιπατητικῶν μεταξὺ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας εἶναι λεγόντων τὴν προκοπὴν· ὥς γὰρ δεῖν φασιν ἢ ὀρθὸν εἶναι ξύλον ἢ στρεβλόν, οὕτως ἢ δίκαιον ἢ ἀδίκον, οὔτε δὲ δικαιότερον οὔτ' ἀδικώτερον, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως. Diogenes uses the same two examples as Simplicius. Also cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.91.3–7 (not in *SVF*).

<sup>57</sup> See Stob. *Ecl.* 2.70.21 = *SVF* 3.104 and Diog. Laert. 7.98 = *SVF* 3.105.

<sup>58</sup> τὰς μὲν γὰρ σχέσεις ταῖς ἐπικτήτοις καταστάσεσι χαρακτηρίζεσθαι, τὰς δὲ ἐξίς ταῖς ἐξ ἐαυτῶν ἐνεργείαις (Simpl. *In. Aristot. Cat.* 238.10–12 = *SVF* 2.393).

<sup>59</sup> Knowledge, for example, is defined as a *ἐξίς* in receiving *φαντασίαι* that cannot be unseated by reason (*SVF* 2.68, 2.93). For geometry, see *Anonymi variae collectiones mathematicae* in Hultschiana Heronis geometricorum et stereometricorum editione 275 = *SVF* 1.70; for pursuits, Stob. *Ecl.* 2.73.1–13 = *SVF* 3.111; for nature, see Diog. Laert. 7.148; *SVF* 2.1132.

<sup>60</sup> Philo *Leg. alleg.* 1.56; *SVF* 3.202; Cic. *Acad. prior.* 2.22.

This leaves us with six examples of ἕξις: health, expertise, knowledge, pursuits, objects with cohesion, and nature. The fact that we find so many different things called ἕξις is not surprising considering that we have several different Stoic descriptions or definitions of ἕξις. I am able to discern at least two general accounts of ἕξις: (a) a physical state that implies variation of degree, and (b) a physical state that produces cohesion as the result of the motion of πνεῦμα back and forth.

These two definitions overlap in that both describe fluctuation. In (a) the fluctuation is in quality, intensity, and time. Thus one can be healthy even though one's health may fluctuate between periods of great vitality and general fatigue. Pursuits such as a love of horses (φιλιππία) and a love of music (φιλομουσία) can also fluctuate in interest or activity with time. In (b) the fluctuation is a continuous and simultaneous flow of πνεῦμα back and forth. It is somewhat paradoxical that an object's cohesion and stability is based on such a fluctuation of internal motion. Nature is a ἕξις in both of the senses above (one might say the same of health as well). For nature is not only characterized by the internal two-way motion or fluctuation of πνεῦμα which is responsible for the cohesion of the cosmos, it is also periodically fluctuating between states of order and disorder, between unity and plurality, and between moist χάος and fiery ἐκπύρωσις.<sup>61</sup> Thus nature tenses and relaxes, continuously producing cohesion in the cosmos and cyclically through time. Hence, these two senses of ἕξις are complementary.

But how is τέχνη or knowledge a ἕξις? If αἴσθησις is a form of knowledge might this not be the meaning of the Aëtius passage? Before we answer this we need to distinguish τέχνη and knowledge. First, there are two general senses of τέχνη that have corresponding definitions. According to Zeno a τέχνη is σύστημα ἐκ καταλήψεων συγγενευμασμένων πρὸς τι τέλος εὐχρηστον τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ<sup>62</sup> and a ἕξις ὁδοποιητική.<sup>63</sup> Cleanthes defined τέχνη as ἕξις ὁδῶ πάντα ἀνύουσα.<sup>64</sup> Zeno's first sense indicates a collection of information; the others suggest a methodical activity. It is this latter sense that is called a ἕξις. Likewise, this latter definition brings to mind the definition of nature as a πῦρ τεχνικὸν ὁδῶ βαδίζον εἰς γένεσιν.<sup>65</sup>

Knowledge is also defined as a ἕξις. Knowledge is similar to τέχνη in that it is a collection of information and also a ἕξις. Stobaeus identifies four senses of knowledge or ἐπιστήμη:

εἶναι δὲ τὴν ἐπιστήμην κατάληψιν ἀσφαλῆ καὶ ἀμετάπτωτον ὑπὸ λόγου· ἐτέραν δὲ ἐπιστήμην σύστημα ἐξ ἐπιστημῶν τοιούτων, οἷον ἢ τῶν κατὰ μέρος λογικῇ ἐν τῷ

<sup>61</sup> The Stoics held that moist, cool substances are the result of loose or relaxed tension, whereas fire is πνεῦμα possessing the highest degree of tension.

<sup>62</sup> Olymp. In Plat. Gorg. p. 53 = SVF 1.73.

<sup>63</sup> Schol. in Dionys. Thrac. p. 663.16 = SVF 1.72.

<sup>64</sup> Olymp. In Plat. Gorg. p. 53 = SVF 1.490.

<sup>65</sup> Gal. Defn. medicae 95 = SVF 2.1133 and Clem. Al. Strom. 5.14 = SVF 2.1134.

σπουδαίῳ ὑπάρχουσα· ἄλλην δὲ σύστημα ἐξ ἐπιστημῶν τεχνικῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἔχον τὸ βέβαιον, ὡς ἔχουσιν αἱ ἀρεταί· ἄλλην δὲ ἔξιν φαντασιῶν δεκτικὴν ἀμετάπτωτον ὑπὸ λόγου, ἣν τινὰ φασιν ἐν τόνῳ καὶ δυνάμει κεῖσθαι.<sup>66</sup>

The sense of knowledge that concerns us here is the last. The other definitions of knowledge do not appear to permit change of degree or intensity. The final sense of knowledge is a *ἔξις* possessing a receptivity for receiving φαντασίαι.<sup>67</sup> What does this mean? Receptivity (δεκτική) suggests a tendency or a state that promotes the acquisition of something.<sup>68</sup> Here *ἔξις* comes very close to the idea of δύναμις.<sup>69</sup> Presumably, calling knowledge a *ἔξις* suggests that a person who has knowledge has a soul whose tensional state somehow facilitates the reception of φαντασίαι. Thus knowledge is not just a collection of καταλήψεις but also a disposition for receiving φαντασίαι.

This receptivity is also said to rest in the τόνος and δύναμις. If our previous claim that δύναμις signifies the power to exercise the faculty of sense perception (in contrast to the activity of the faculty or the faculty itself) we can say that a person who has knowledge must also have a certain faculty for knowing (the commanding faculty) and that the faculty must have a certain degree of tension *ἔξις*. In short, knowledge may be a *ἔξις* in so far as it is reducible to a state of the commanding faculty of the soul which is characterized by a *ἔξις*-motion and which promotes a cognition.

We now come to the last of the three general meanings of αἴσθησις, an assent (συγκατάθεσις). The claim that αἴσθησις is an assent is necessarily true if αἴσθησις is also a κατάληψις for the κατάληψις is by definition an assent. Before getting to this, it is necessary to make sense of a less Stoic-looking term, ἀντίληψις. We recall that Aëtius states, "the Stoics define αἴσθησις thus: αἴσθησις is an apprehension (ἀντίληψις) or cognition (κατάληψις) through

<sup>66</sup> "[The Stoics say] scientific knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] is a cognition [κατάληψις] which is secure and unchangeable by reason. It is secondly a system of such ἐπιστήμαι, like the rational cognition of particulars which exists in the virtuous man. It [scientific knowledge here = science] is thirdly a system of expert ἐπιστήμαι, which has intrinsic stability, just as the virtues do. Fourthly, it is a tenor for the reception of impressions which is unchangeable by reason, and consisting, they say, in tension and power" (Stob. *Ed.* 2.73.16–74.3 = *SVF* 3.112; Long and Sedley 1987: tr. 41H).

<sup>67</sup> This position was held by Herillus according to Diogenes Laertius (7.165). It is likely that Chrysippus eventually rejected this view on account of his view that *ἔξις* suggests a range or degree.

<sup>68</sup> This is reminiscent of Democritus' warning that if we associate with bad people a disposition (*ἔξις*) towards wickedness will grow (D.K. fr. B 184). Also see ps.-Pl. *Defin.* 411c9: "Ὅτις *ἔξις* διακριτικὴ σωμάτων.

<sup>69</sup> Bonhöffer (1890) holds that the distinctions between *ἔξις*, δύναμις, and ἐνέργεια are contrived and are thus of "keinem wissenschaftlichen Werte" (123). I argue that there is an important difference between δύναμις and *ἔξις* even though both may eventually refer to the sensory apparatus; for a δύναμις is what *enables* the activity, whereas the degree of tension in the *ἔξις* *promotes* the activity. The denotation is probably the same, though the connotation is subtly different.

the sense-organs." In Diocles' definition of αἴσθησις preserved by Diogenes Laertius there is no mention of ἀντίληψις; instead he simply states that the term αἴσθησις signifies "the κατάληψις through the senses." The absence of the term ἀντίληψις in Diocles' definition is suspicious. The omission coupled with the relative rarity of the term in genuine Stoic fragments should raise doubt as to whether the term accurately represents the actual language used in the early Stoa. Sextus Empiricus frequently uses the term while talking about the Stoics, but again he unflinchingly attributes κατάληψις to the Presocratics. Did the Stoics actually say that αἴσθησις is an ἀντίληψις or is this Aëtius' attempt to assist readers who might be unfamiliar with the more specialized term κατάληψις?<sup>70</sup>

The noun ἀντίληψις comes from the verb ἀντιλαμβάνω which literally means "to receive instead of" or "to grasp something in turn." It can signify any form of grasping or reception but often carries the connotation of reciprocity.<sup>71</sup> In a philosophical context the term came to signify dialectical reciprocity. Plato and Xenophon use the noun to signify an objection or rejoinder to something asserted.<sup>72</sup> Hence, any response to an argument or claim, especially one which is critical or polemical, is an ἀντίληψις.<sup>73</sup> The term ἀντίληψις does not appear in the extant corpus of Aristotle.<sup>74</sup> It is, however, used in the writings of Theophrastus. In *De causis plantarum* Theophrastus utilizes the term both to signify the roots of fruit trees taking hold (3.6.6) and the activity of a vine clinging to a fence (2.18.2).

At some point the noun ἀντίληψις began to be used to refer to apprehension or awareness. One might suppose that the prefix suggests a reflective consciousness. This, however, would be unjustified; the basic meaning of the prefix is simply

<sup>70</sup> The Arabic translator of Aëtius seems to have been baffled by the term κατάληψις. Consequently, he translated κατάληψις with the Arabic term *intibā* which is an imprint or impression (Daiber: *Einprägung*), probably assuming the term to be similar in meaning to τύπωσις; see Daiber 1980: 196–197. The assumption was incorrect: a κατάληψις is not an imprint or impression but a form of assent.

<sup>71</sup> The term is also used in a medical context. Thucydides (1.120.2) used the term to signify the grasp of a disease on a body. Also see the Hippocratic treatises *De natura hominis* 2.22.17 and *De officina medici* 9.18.

<sup>72</sup> In Plato the noun ἀντίληψις always refers to an objection or dialectical response: *Phd.* 87a6, *Hp. mai.* 287a6, *Sph.* 241b5. The noun is used similarly in Xenophon: *Hist. Graec.* 3.5.5. The verb, on the other hand, is used more loosely to signify the act of grasping or laying hold of any physical object (*La.* 183e2–184a1, *Prt.* 317d8, 335d1, *Ti.* 44e4), to object to a claim (*Phd.* 84c7, *Grg.* 506a2, *Hp. mai.* 287a4–8, *Rep.* 505a1, *Thr.* 189c11, *Sph.* 239d1), and in one case to grasp a concept (*Sph.* 251b6).

<sup>73</sup> This is how the term is defined in the *Souda*: "ἀντίληψις ἀντί τοῦ ἐπίληψις. Πλάτων Ἀντιλήπτωρ δὲ ὁ ἀντιλαμβάνόμενος." The noun never carries the sense of awareness or apprehension in the genuine works of Plato (in ps.-Pl. *Definitions* we find: ὁκνος φυγῇ πόνων· δειλία ἀντιληπτική ὁρμηής). LSJ translate ἀντιληπτική as "able to check" for this passage.

<sup>74</sup> Although the noun does not appear in Aristotle's corpus, the verb does appear a number of times. However, it is always used in the physical sense of recovering something (property, breath) or seizing something (the reins of a horse); it does not appear in any discussion of cognition or perception.

“over against, opposite, facing.”<sup>75</sup> This is exactly the sense that we see in Plato’s usage. An objection opposes or stands over and against the initial assertion. The cognitive sense of ἀντίληψις can also be seen as something viewed over and against something, especially when viewed from the perspective of a representational theory of perception.

The earliest uses of ἀντίληψις having the sense of apprehension or a grasp of the mind are found in the doxographical accounts of the Stoics and the Epicureans.<sup>76</sup> This, however, does not imply that the Stoics or Epicureans themselves used the term. The texts must be examined individually to determine if the term belongs to those who are reporting the theory (later doxographers and commentators) or those who held the theory (the early Stoics). I argue that in every case, with the possible exception of the text of Aëtius under consideration (4.8), the term is not used by a Stoic but by the person reporting the theory.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, even if the term is Stoic, its force is neutral, and it simply emphasizes the reception of the content of the φαντασία. The two final meanings of αἴσθησις will show that in so far as it is the reception of the content, αἴσθησις has a specific source and very specific epistemic character.

We are now left with the final two claims: that αἴσθησις is a κατάληψις and an assent. In English we call both the act of receiving sensory content and the acceptance of the content as being about the world as “perception.” When then the content is not accepted as true or accurate we say that we are hallucinating, misperceiving, observing an illusion, etc. For this reason perception is both the activity of receiving sensory information and the acceptance which follows. Julia Annas sums this up nicely: “In any perception, there will be not only an appearance, but some kind of acceptance by the person’s mind of the propositional content of the appearance.”<sup>78</sup> This is why the content (whether it makes a claim or not) should not be confused with perception. Our perceptions have content (both logical and phenomenal) but are not identical with the content. When we accept the content as being representative of the world, then we say we perceive something. This acceptance is a sort of belief. And likewise, belief (*doxa*), according to the Stoics is a “weak assent.”

If the list of meanings ended here we would have a relatively good match for the English term “perception” in αἴσθησις. However, the final claims make αἴσθησις too specific in terms of epistemological values and exclusive origin. For

<sup>75</sup>LSJ 1968: 153.

<sup>76</sup>LSJ list Aëtius’ definition as one such instance.

<sup>77</sup>The same applies to Epicurus. LSJ list Epicurus fr. 250 (Usener) as the first use of the term meaning “grasping with the mind, apprehension.” This text is actually Plutarch summarizing Colotes’ view (Plut. *Adv. Col.* 5.1109d). The term does not appear in the extant writings of Epicurus. We find a similar situation when consulting Bonitz’s index of Aristotle. Bonitz lists a single occurrence of ἀντίληψις in Aristotle, fr. 202 (Rose). This turns out to be a passage in Simplicius’ commentary on *De caelo* where Simplicius is describing Democritus’ view. Diels-Kranz list the same passage in their index under Democritus. Clearly the term belongs to Simplicius.

<sup>78</sup>Annas 1990: 186.

αἴσθησις is not only an assent, it is also a κατάληψις and more specifically, a κατάληψις through the sense-organs (δι' αἰσθητηρίου):

Αἴσθησις δὲ λέγεται κατὰ τοὺς Στωικοὺς . . . ἢ δι' αὐτῶν κατάληψιν.<sup>79</sup>

Οἱ Στωικοὶ ὀρίζονται οὕτως τὴν αἴσθησιν· αἴσθησίς ἐστιν ἀντίληψις δι' αἰσθητηρίου ἢ κατάληψις.<sup>80</sup>

Οἱ Στωικοὶ πᾶσαν αἴσθησιν εἶναι συγκατάθεσιν καὶ κατάληψιν.<sup>81</sup>

*Quod autem erat sensu comprehensum, id ipsum sensum appellabat.*<sup>82</sup>

Οἱ Στωικοὶ τὰς μὲν αἰσθήσεις ἀληθεῖς, τῶν δὲ φαντασιῶν τὰς μὲν ἀληθεῖς, τὰς δὲ ψευδεῖς.<sup>83</sup>

This final use of αἴσθησις is therefore more strict or narrow than the meaning of “perception” in English, which may or may not suggest epistemic success in relation to the perceptual content. An αἴσθησις is a κατάληψις received through the sense-organs and κατάληψις is an assent to a καταληπτική φαντασία.<sup>84</sup> While it is true that properly speaking assent is to the proposition, one cannot legitimately isolate the φαντασία from the proposition or λεκτόν. The proposition subsists with the φαντασία, not with the mind. Subsistence is not the same thing as causal production. The φαντασία does not produce the proposition in the mind; the proposition is an incorporeal feature of the φαντασία. Therefore, the Stoics can freely speak of assenting to a φαντασία since the propositional content of the φαντασία is an inseparable feature of it. In short, it is the logical structure of the physical impression. Thus the two claims, that αἴσθησις is an assent and the claim that αἴσθησις is a κατάληψις are, in fact, saying the same thing.

Does this mean that the terms αἴσθησις and κατάληψις, then, are synonymous? No. An αἴσθησις is a species of κατάληψις. Thus every αἴσθησις (in so far as we are referring to our third class of meaning) is a κατάληψις but not every κατάληψις is an αἴσθησις. They differ in scope. Both are assents but αἴσθησις is an assent to a more restricted class of φαντασίαι. Φαντασίαι can be classified

<sup>79</sup> Diog. Laert. 7.52 = SVF 2.71.

<sup>80</sup> Aëtius 4.8.1 = SVF 2.850.

<sup>81</sup> Aëtius 4.8.12 = SVF 2.72.

<sup>82</sup> Cic. *Acad. post.* 1.41 = SVF 1.60.

<sup>83</sup> Aëtius 4.9.4 = SVF 2.78.

<sup>84</sup> Baron Reed in an article attempting to show that Chrysippus and the later Stoics subscribed to a form of direct perceptual realism argued that one does not assent to a φαντασία but to the propositional content or λεκτόν subsisting with a rational φαντασία. This is important to his argument for if one assents to the φαντασία itself as an intermediate object of perception, the direct realism option is undermined. He therefore argues that the texts which explicitly state that assent is to the φαντασία are simply cases of “loose talk.” He states (2002: 168–169): “So, rather than saying the impression has the content to which the mind must then assent, we may say that the mind has the content in thought directly. The impression is now characterized as no more than a part of the causal process involved in perception; it enables the mind to have a content (i.e., to entertain a proposition), but it does not, in the strictest sense, have the content itself.”

in a number of different ways. One way is to distinguish them according to their source. Diogenes Laertius states:

τῶν δὲ φαντασιῶν κατ' αὐτοὺς αἱ μὲν εἰσιν αἰσθητικαί, αἱ δ' οὐ· αἰσθητικαὶ μὲν αἱ δι' αἰσθητηρίου ἢ αἰσθητηρίων λαμβανόμεναι, οὐκ αἰσθητικαὶ δὲ αἱ διὰ τῆς διανοίας, καθάπερ τῶν ἁσωμάτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν λόγῳ λαμβανομένων. τῶν δὲ αἰσθητικῶν <αἱ μὲν> ἀπὸ ὑπαρχόντων μετὰ εἴξεως καὶ συγκαταθέσεως γίνονται.<sup>85</sup>

The claim that not all φαντασίαι are sensory or come through the senses does not mean that the non-sensory φαντασίαι are independent of the senses. Rather they are not *directly* produced by the senses. Diogenes Laertius also says that some of these sensory φαντασίαι come from an existing object with yielding and assent. This tells us that not all sensory φαντασίαι will succeed in the production of αἴσθησις.

If we classify φαντασίαι not according to their source but according to their epistemological value we get a different division of φαντασίαι. Φαντασίαι can also be classified as καταληπτική or non-καταληπτική. A καταληπτική φαντασία, according to Sextus, has four characteristics: (1) it must be from an existing object; (2) it is in accordance with the existing object; (3) it must be well stamped or imprinted; (4) it must not be from a non-existent object.<sup>86</sup> An assent to such a φαντασία constitutes a κατάληψις. Thus an αἴσθησις is an assent to a φαντασία that is both αἰσθητική (origin) and καταληπτική (epistemological status). Only in this way can we make sense of the claim that all αἰσθήσεις are true.

By understanding αἴσθησις in this narrower sense we can avoid the problem which Rist (1969: 135) wrestled with:

At this point in the theory we are up against a terminological difficulty. On the one hand there are texts which say that all αἰσθήσεις are true; on the other hand we have texts which say that every αἴσθησις is an assent and an act of recognition (κατάληψις). If every αἴσθησις is an assent, it would follow that, if αἴσθησις means "perception," every assent and recognition in the sphere of perception must also be "true"—which would go far towards making everyone incapable of being mistaken about perception. That is obviously un-Stoic.

It is only obviously un-Stoic if we ignore how the Stoics define αἴσθησις and if we fail to distinguish αἴσθησις from the φαντασία. I argue that the claims which trouble Rist are in fact both true and perfectly consistent. All αἰσθήσεις are true since αἴσθησις is defined as a κατάληψις through the senses and since

<sup>85</sup> "According to them among φαντασίαι some are sensory and some not. Sensory are those which we receive through a sense-organ or sense-organs, but non-sensory are those which we receive through the mind, for example those of incorporeals and of the other things received by reason. Among sensory φαντασίαι, some are produced from real things with yielding and assent" (Diog. Laert. 7.51 = *SVF* 2.61)

<sup>86</sup> Sext. Emp. *Math.* 9.182–183 (= *SVF* 2.97)

all καταλήψεις are necessarily true.<sup>87</sup> The problem is not so much with the Stoics, but with our attempt to map the English term “perception” onto Stoic epistemology.

The confusion also arises when we conflate αἴσθησις as an activity producing the φαντασία (which may or may not be epistemically successful), and αἴσθησις as a κατάληψις or veridical assent produced by means of the senses. As an activity, αἴσθησις refers to any event in which information is transmitted by means of the sensory apparatus producing the propositional phenomenon of the φαντασία. Thus αἴσθησις as an activity can produce misperceptions. However, as an epistemological apprehension the Stoics use the term αἴσθησις far more discriminately, emphasizing the origin and success. Αἴσθησις in this sense is reserved specifically for the successful apprehension of the sense-object through the sensory apparatus. Thus αἴσθησις is not the proper term for general sensory experience or sensation as Barnouw suggests.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The basic assumption of this article is that careful work in the history of philosophy requires a clear grasp of the range and use of technical vocabulary. In cases in which significant terms are used in various ways, a knowledge of the scope and lexical range of the term is important and thereby can contribute to important philosophical debates. In this article I have argued that there are at least eight meanings or senses of the term αἴσθησις and that these can be categorized under three general senses: the sensory apparatus, the activity producing the φαντασία, and the culminating successful apprehension (κατάληψις) of and assent to a specific kind of φαντασία. All three of these meanings can be found in both the definitions of Diocles and Aëtius.

In addition to sorting out the meanings of the term αἴσθησις, I have also shown what αἴσθησις is not. It is not a generic perceptual experience or sensation; indeed, the *qualia* or experiential aspect of perception is notably absent in the Stoic definitions. Furthermore, by analysing the multivocity of αἴσθησις we have seen more clearly the precise role of the φαντασία in the act of perception. It was shown that φαντασία is not “perception” but the content of perception. The αἴσθησις frames perceptual experience and content. It represents the apparatus that receives and transmits perceptual information including its structure and readiness; it refers to the activity of this apparatus including the transmission of sensory information, the formation of the φαντασία, and the assent or acceptance of the φαντασία as being representative of the world; finally, the αἴσθησις has a normative sense limiting the assent to the veridical καταληπτική φαντασία

<sup>87</sup> The other two general meanings of αἴσθησις, the apparatus of perception and the activity, are appropriate to the claim regarding the truth-value of αἴσθησις. Some argue that φαντασίαι are also not applicable to the claims of true and false; however, φαντασίαι may be representational of an object or not and this is one of the meanings of “true” (ἀληθής).



produced by means of the senses. In this way we can understand how all αἰσθήσεις are true. In closing, it should now be clear that the term αἴσθησις is far from being simple or unimportant. It is a central term in Stoic epistemology. Hence it looks as though the neglected and spurned epistemological sister of φαντασία should have been asked to dance long ago.

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