

The Coherence of Stoic Ontology

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Abstract

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Any thoroughgoing physicalist is challenged to give an account of immaterial entities such as thoughts and mathematical objects. The Stoics, who eagerly affirmed that only bodies exist, crafted an elegant solution to this challenge: not everything that is Something (*ti*) exists. Rather, some things have a derivative mode of reality they call *subsistence*: these entities are non-existent in that they are not themselves solid bodies, but they are nonetheless Something physical because they depend on bodies for their subsistence. My dissertation uncovers the unifying principles of Stoic subsistence, and shows how they can account for thoughts and other immaterial entities without running afoul of their physicalist commitments.

While all commentators agree that the Stoics posited Something as the highest category of being, they have failed to find a coherent physicalist account of Stoic ontology. For instance, (1) a canonical set of *incorporeals* (time, place, void, and what is sayable (*lekton*)) is well attested, but there is little agreement as to what these entities have in common as incorporeals, which makes the category look like an *ad hoc* collection of left-over entities. (2) It is also contentious whether the Stoics recognized other non-existent Somethings besides the incorporeals, namely a third category of Somethings that are *neither corporeal nor incorporeal*. (3) Finally, many commentators take the Stoics to countenance an additional class of *Not-Somethings* between Something and nothing at all, rendering Something incoherent as highest and most comprehensive genus.

I argue first that the Stoics developed a criterion for subsistence that applies to all immaterial Somethings, admitting only objective particulars. Further, I show that the Stoics recognized not just one but two kinds of subsistence: one that defines the *incorporeals* as a class, and the other what is *neither corporeal nor incorporeal*. The incorporeals can all be seen as *body-less*: entities that depend on body without themselves being bodies, much as the flow of traffic depends on cars without being identical to the cars. They are immaterial but still physical; in modern parlance, one might say the Stoics take incorporeals to supervene on bodies.

How such a thesis can apply to the Sayables, or *lekta* (roughly, the meanings of our words) is an especially thorny issue (for the Stoics as for contemporary philosophers of mind). If *lekta* subsist according to rational impressions (*logikai phantasiai*), themselves mental and corporeal, it is not clear how these novel semantic entities get the objectivity they need to do their hefty dialectical duties. How can mind-dependent entities be the propositional content shared in communication, have

logical properties and play the role of facts? I argue that the Stoics had on offer a certain doctrine of *meaning as use* that can address these challenges without running afoul of the principle of *body-less* subsistence that unifies the incorporeals as a category. Stoic incorporeals are thus not a mere *ad hoc* collection of left over entities (as impasse (1) above suggested), but a principled segment of reality.

What is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, which includes mathematical entities and creatures of fiction, is also a principled ontological category. Adducing broad textual evidence, I show that the Stoics recognized a mode of subsistence unique to products of thought, and that they categorized centaurs and points, for example, accordingly. Since the thoughts, texts and illustrations that give rise to such entities are themselves corporeal, the account remains true to their physicalist commitments. This second mode of subsistence, previously unnoticed by commentators, underwrites a comprehensive tripartite ontology, settling problems (2) and (3) above. The result is an elegant, modern-minded ontology with principled responses to problems that continue to engage physicalists today.

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Abbreviations

Alexander of Aphrodisias	Alex.	<i>On Aristotle's Prior Analytics</i> <i>On Aristotle's Topics</i>	<i>In Ar. An. pr.</i> <i>In Ar. Top.</i>
Ammonius	—	<i>On Aristotle's De interpretatione</i>	<i>In Ar. De int.</i>
Cicero	—	<i>Academica</i>	<i>Acad.</i>
Clement	—	<i>Miscellanies (Stromateis)</i>	<i>Strom.</i>
Cleomedes	Cleom.	<i>On the circular motions of celestial bodies</i> <i>Astronomy</i>	<i>De motu</i> <i>Cael.</i>
Diogenes Laertius	DL	<i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>	*
Galen	—	<i>On Hippocrates' and Plato's doctrines</i> <i>On incorporeal qualities</i> <i>On the differences in pulses</i>	<i>Plac.</i> <i>Qual. Inc.</i> <i>Diff. puls.</i>
Philo of Alexandria	Philo	<i>Allegories of the Laws</i> <i>Questions and answers on Genesis</i>	<i>Leg. alleg.</i> <i>Quaest.</i>
Plotinus	Plot.	<i>Enneads</i>	<i>Enn.</i>
Plutarch	Plut.	<i>Against Colotes</i> <i>On common conceptions</i> <i>On Stoic self-contradictions</i> <i>On moral virtue</i>	<i>Col.</i> <i>Comm. not.</i> <i>St. rep.</i> <i>Virt. mor.</i>
Proclus	Proc.	<i>On Euclid's Elements</i> <i>On Plato's Timaeus</i>	<i>In Eucl. El.</i> <i>In Plat. Tim.</i>
Seneca	—	<i>Letters (Epistulae)</i>	<i>Ep.</i>
Sextus Empiricus	SE	<i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i> <i>Against the professors (Adversus mathematicos)</i>	<i>PH</i> <i>M.</i>
Simplicius	Simpl.	<i>On Aristotle's Categories</i> <i>On Aristotle's On the heavens</i>	<i>In Ar. Cat.</i> <i>In Ar. De caelo</i>
Stobaeus	Stob.	<i>Anthology</i>	*
Syrianus	—	<i>On Aristotle's Metaphysics</i>	<i>In Ar. Met.</i>
Von Arnim	—	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i>	SVF
Long & Sedley	LS	<i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i>	*

* Indicates that all citations are from the work listed, so only the author's name will be cited

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I

Introduction: The Problem with Stoic Metaphysics

The core challenge facing every student of Stoic thought is the scarcity of textual evidence. Further, the textual evidence we do have is second-hand and often from sources hostile to their views. Engaging in Stoic scholarship is thus like untangling an ancient knot of conflicting evidence and interpretation. Every thread you pull is tied up with the others, so that untangling one part of the knot often results in a bigger tangle elsewhere. Many scholars, ancient and modern, have accepted the mess as a function of the Stoics' own incoherence and confusion, either straight away because they are hostile to the Stoics' views, or unwittingly in trying to make sense of one strand of thought but making matters worse on the whole. Sometimes people find incoherence in the Stoics' shared philosophical commitments as a school. Other times the incoherence results from interpretations that find internal disagreement among Stoic thinkers, so that they no longer seem to be operating against a background of shared assumptions; in that case, one wonders what sense there is to calling them "the Stoics."

My objective is to show that the Stoics earned their reputation for being systematic thinkers and that there is a common ontological thread to the fabric of Stoic philosophy. Once we identify that thread, their apparent incoherence unravels. Then we can see internal disagreement among the Stoics as a matter of settling the details of how their shared assumptions play out rather than belying the system as a whole. Many interpretive difficulties will remain, inevitably; we will never untangle the knot altogether with so little evidence to guide the inquiry. However, I will show that when we untangle the Stoics' accounting of reality and let their ontology guide our own inquiry, many ancient and contemporary puzzles about Stoic metaphysics dissolve. To be sure, others emerge, but the biggest and most foundational knot will be untangled so that we can see the Stoic ontology as principled, coherent and comprehensive. In effect, I am arguing that we have good reason to speak of "the Stoics" under this umbrella term, not just because we have too little evidence to do otherwise. In so doing, I need not deny (for example) that Roman Stoics were more focused on ethics than physics, that Chrysippus made great advances in logic, or that Posidonius was unorthodox in his views on void. On the contrary, the idea is that by identifying a core ideology one can better understand heterodox views as heterodox, as well as understand the contributions made by each successor as contributions rather than contradictions. Only against a background of shared assumptions does the individuality of each thinker become salient.

My approach has an additional methodological virtue: it makes the most of our scant testimony. It is common for Stoic scholars to ignore or write off recalcitrant testimony, which is justifiable enough when it comes from hostile sources. However, with the ontology set aright, polemical testimony is no longer recalcitrant despite—or rather, *because of* its being hostile. The best insults hit a nerve by saying something true, and with the ontology that I propose on behalf of the Stoics, we can see better what is true in hostile reports and thus make the most of our meager evidence. With an active principle of charity that seeks coherence in the Stoics and something more than mere misunderstanding in their critics, we can attain a clearer picture of the most powerful school of thought in Hellenistic philosophy.

The Stoic school, founded by Zeno of Citium (Cyprus) in the fourth century BCE, is so named for the painted porch or colonnade, the *stoa poikilē*, where Zeno and his followers did their thinking. The school flourished under Cleanthes (from 262) and especially Chrysippus (from 232) in the third century; indeed, Chrysippus made great advances in logic, and remains the proverbial poster child for early Stoicism: “if there had been no Chrysippus, there would have been no Stoa.” He was followed by Zeno of Tarsus, Diogenes of Babylon, Antipater of Tarsus, Panaetius of Rhodes, Mnesarchus, Dardanus, and Posidonius, who make up the middle period of Stoicism in the second and first centuries BCE. The Hellenistic era ended in 31 AD, but Stoicism endured in the Roman period with thinkers such as Seneca the Younger, Musonius, Epictetus, and Emperor Marcus Aurelius. I will not undertake a systematic study of individual Stoic contributions except insofar as we can find in them the common ontological thread that is my focus. I provide this brief overview to give the uninitiated reader a sense of how long the school endured and how many individual figures it includes.¹

The other important piece of background to note is that the Stoics worked in conversation with their competitors, the Epicureans and Academic skeptics, in an intellectual setting that was “more self-consciously systematic”² than the classical era of Plato and Aristotle (and, of course, the presocratics). With Plato and Aristotle, Athens became the epicenter of philosophy. When Alexandria was established in Egypt as an intellectual hub in its own right, it attracted many specialized or extended disciplines that had previously been studied in Plato’s Academy and Aristotle’s Lyceum under the umbrella of philosophy. The result was that in the Hellenistic era, philosophy in Athens itself became increasingly specialized, doctrinal and systematic. In “the new era a philosophy was above all an integrated system for the complete understanding of the world’s basic structure and man’s place in it. One’s choice of philosophical allegiance, it was assumed, would radically affect one’s whole outlook on life.”³

Both the Epicureans and the Stoics focused on physics, the study of the material cosmos, as the key to happiness. In this respect, the Hellenistic return to cosmology was not just a rehashing of presocratic ground, but a necessary first step for leading the good life. There could be no ethics without physics, in stark contrast with Socrates and his predecessors. The Epicureans deduced the world order and resulting hedonism from a set of first principles, eschewing idealism, immaterial souls and teleology for an atomistic materialism that finds the good life in freedom from irrational fears of the unknown. In the meantime, Plato’s Academy had taken a left turn into skepticism under the leadership of Arcesilaus. While the Academic skeptics firmly rejected the possibility of knowledge as pursued by their peers, nonetheless they were systematic in this rejection and considered the practice of withholding assent crucial to the good life. Thus, even in rejecting a philosophical system, the Academics were systematic, which emphasizes that the Hellenistic era was characterized by *schools* of thought unlike what Plato and even Aristotle provided.

This brings us to the Stoic system. Like the Epicureans, the Stoics were staunch materialists; but they have little else in common. The Epicureans were atomists, who took the world order to be accidental. The Stoics, on the other hand, were monistic continuum physicists who took the world

¹ See Sandbach (1975) for an illuminating survey of Stoicism more focused on individual contributions to the school.

² As LS put the point (1987: 1)

³ op. cit.: 2

order to be the result of divine reason (*logos*). According to Diogenes Laertius, a neutral third-century AD doxographer and biographer:

They [the Stoics] compare philosophy to a living being, likening logic to bones and sinews, ethics to the fleshier parts, and physics to the soul. They make a further comparison to an egg: logic is the outside, ethics what comes next, and physics the innermost parts; or to a fertile field, the surrounding wall corresponds to logic, its fruit to ethics, and its land or trees to physics; or to a city that is well fortified and governed according to reason. On the statements of some of them, no part is given preference over another but they are mixed together; and they [these Stoics] used to transmit them in mixed form.⁴

One might think that in an era when the good life, or happiness, was the chief aim of a philosophical system ethics would take pride of place over logic and physics. But what we find is that physics, or cosmology, corresponds to the soul of a person and the yolk of an egg. This confirms that the first step toward the good life is physics, which makes the Hellenistic interest in cosmology importantly different from that of the presocratics. So much is uncontroversial.⁵ My thesis, however, is that the Stoics led with something even more fundamental than physics, namely a principled ontology according to which their physics, ethics and logic were developed. Why, then, one might wonder, is there no part of the egg corresponding to their ontology, or what today we would term metaphysics? The answer is that just as the three parts of philosophy are mixed together and only sometimes distinct for the sake of pedagogy, so too the ontology is inseparable from the each part, and physics most of all. In the same way that divine reason (*logos*) pervades the cosmos, the Stoics' ontological principles pervade their philosophy. There is no part of the cosmos to single out as *logos* because it is everywhere, as there is no part of philosophy to single out as ontology or metaphysics because it is everywhere.

Nonetheless the ontology is discernible as a guiding principle in Stoic philosophy. This thesis is contentious because few scholars have agreed that the Stoics had guiding ontological principles, let alone what they were or that their accounting of reality was coherent and comprehensive. Therein lies my contribution: I will show that the Stoics led with their ontology, which is not only discernible but in fact essential to a proper understanding of the Stoics' views; seen aright, the Stoic ontology settles many long-standing interpretive difficulties and makes the most of recalcitrant texts. That the Stoics' ontological principles have not so far been readily discernible is testament to their pervasive and foundational nature,⁶ not to a haphazard approach to the philosophical system.

One thing that everyone can agree on is that the Stoics considered Something (*ti*) the highest genus of reality,⁷ and that it includes bodies (*somata*), which exist (*einai*), as well as entities classified as

⁴ 7.40 (26B, part). Parenthetical citations like 26B refer to passages in LS by their chapter and order therein; translations are in Vol. 1, original Greek and Roman texts in Vol. 2; unless otherwise indicated, translations are from LS with occasional modifications.

⁵ See White 2003 for a good discussion

⁶ And, of course, to the scarcity of texts as well as their polemical bent. I certainly don't wish to minimize the handicap with which Stoic scholarship must proceed.

⁷ Alex., *In Ar. Top.* 301,19-25 (27B), 359,12-16 (30D); DL, 7.60-1 (30C); Philo, *Leg. alleg.* 2.86; Plut., *Col.* 1116BC, *Comm. not.* 1074D; Seneca, *Ep.* 58.13 (27A); SE, *M.* 1.17 (27C), 10.218 (27D), 10.234; Simpl., *In Ar. Cat.* 105,7-20 (30E); Stob., 1.136,21-137,6 (30A)

incorporeal (*asomata*),⁸ which are said to *subsist* (*huphistanaí*) but not to *exist*. Nothing else about the Stoic ontology is uncontroversial, including (or rather, especially) what these terms mean. Though there is a generally accepted canon of incorporeals, namely place, void, time, and what is sayable (or *lekton*—roughly, the meanings of our words), it is not settled whether these were the only four. Further, and more importantly, it's not clear what these entities have in common insofar as they are incorporeal, or what it even means to say that they subsist. Indeed, it is a commonplace to assume that the Stoics introduced the category of Something as an *ad hoc* device to deal with recalcitrant incorporeal entities that don't quite fit the corporeal mold but aren't dispensable either.

For instance, Gerard Watson says “it is natural to expect that everything there is should come under one supreme class of Being, ὄν; but because of difficulties springing from their ἀσώματα [incorporeals] theory, the Stoics preferred to replace this with τὸ τί, [Something] which includes all that can be talked about, whether it has actual physical existence or not.”⁹ In particular, Watson takes the sayable (*lekton*) to be the problem incorporeal that forced the Stoics to come up with Something in addition.¹⁰ Likewise, Dorothea Frede has said that because *lekta* don't fit the Stoics' ontological scheme, i.e., the corporeal mold, too well “the Stoics then had to introduce a special, somewhat airy sounding category of ‘somethings’ (τίνα).”¹¹ Other scholars take other incorporeals to be the odd man out, causing problems for the ontology as a whole; for example, Emile Bréhier says: “identifying being with body, they are thereby forced to admit space and time, if not as existents, at least as definite things.”¹² Yet others take Something to have been introduced for figments like Centaurs and Giants.¹³ Though the details vary, there is a common tendency to assume the move to Something as highest genus was *ad hoc*, and see it as a concession the Stoics had to make when their materialism failed them.

This assumption comes in more and less hostile versions. On one end of the spectrum there are those who take the Stoics to be downright incoherent by their very own lights and who are on the attack against Stoic views. It's a long-standing tradition inherited from ancient commentators, including the Academics, Peripatetics and neoplatonists (from whom we get most of our information). For example, Plutarch devoted a single work, *On common conceptions against the Stoics*, to showing how the Stoics flout common sense; and another to their sheer incoherence, titled *On Stoic self-contradictions*. So it's not surprising to read things like the following in contemporary scholarship: the Stoics “conced[e] the existence of four ‘incorporeals’... Yet it is apparent that in the Stoic philosophy the term ‘incorporeal’ is a cause of embarrassment”¹⁴ because incorporeality and reality are incompatible ontological realities;¹⁵ thus the Stoics were trapped in perplexities of their own making.¹⁶ Call this kind of view, the hostile view.

⁸ Alex., *In Ar. Top.*, 359,12-16 (30D); Clement, *Strom.* 8.9.26.3-4 (55C); Cleom., *De motu* 8,10-14 (49C); Nemesius 78,7-79,2 (45C), 81, 6-10 (45D); Proc., *In Plat. Tim.*, 271D (51F); SE, *M.*, 8.11-12 (33B), 8.409 (27E), 9.211 (55B), 10.218 (27D); Siml. *In Ar. Cat.*, 217,32-218,1 (28L); Stob. 1.161,8-26 (49A), 2.97,15-98,6 (33J)

⁹ 1966: 49-50

¹⁰ op. cit., p. 92

¹¹ 1990: 213-4

¹² 1928: 2; see also 51

¹³ Including the source of our evidence for Centaurs and Giants, Seneca's *Ep.* 58.13-15 (27A); and as J.M. Rist points out (1971: 41); see also Zeller, who takes Something to have been introduced only later by Chrysippus (1880)

¹⁴ Panayiotis Tzamalikos (1991: 540)

¹⁵ op. cit., p. 553

¹⁶ op. cit., p. 554

Others who make the assumption that the Stoics couldn't avoid and didn't welcome Something as the highest genus are not inherently hostile, but still render the move *ad hoc* and are sheepish about it on the Stoics' behalf. For instance, although David E. Hahm takes himself to be vindicating Stoicism from "looking like some kind of schizophrenic eclecticism,"¹⁷ he goes on to say that recognizing the incorporeals as Somethings (*tina*) in contrast to beings (*onta*) "[s]ounds like a face-saving device to allow the Stoics to think and talk about things that have no substantial existence (cf. SVF 2.332)."¹⁸ Yet others assume that Something is an *ad hoc* device, but without embarrassment on the Stoics' behalf. The common problem is that to take the category of Something as forced upon the Stoics by their other commitments is already to make the ontology incoherent and unprincipled. Some are not bothered by this result, but they should be; for it renders the most prominent and systematic school of the Hellenistic era mere metaphysical bumbler. And we should think twice before accepting that their leading status as philosophers was not well earned. An example of this third kind of attitude toward Something as an unintended and unfortunate consequence (call this the indifferent view) can be found in Michael Frede, who rightly likens the Stoics to the materialist Giants of Plato's *Sophist*, but then adds:

But the Stoics also realize that their theory makes reference to items like the void, space, time, and *lekta* which are not bodies, but which cannot be said to be altogether nothing, to have no status whatsoever. Hence for items of this kind they introduce the category of a something (*ti*) which, though incorporeal, is not nothing (see S.E., M x.218). Correspondingly they introduce the notion of subsistence (*huphistanaí*), as opposed to being (*einai*), to characterize the mode of existence of these items.¹⁹

Such a view sets the bar low, practically congratulating the Stoics for recognizing that they were committed to the incorporeals and finding some terminology to slap on to the problem entities. In fact, later in the same article Frede takes it that *subsistence* is itself an *ad hoc* term developed to handle the secondary, slackened notion of a *lekton* as something sayable that can be false, as opposed to the real, existing (*huparchon*) facts we read off the world. Not only was Something brought in to handle pesky incorporeals that aren't bodies, but the incorporeals themselves were sufficiently inchoate that they morphed from what Frede calls a metaphysical concept to a logical concept. The Stoics' *ad hoc* fix didn't stick the first time, it seems. Perhaps in a similar spirit, Jonathan Barnes marvels that sayables are not only not corporeal (which they should have been) but "there is worse: ... they do not even exist," which he parses to his satisfaction by saying that the *lekton* "is not some further item in the world, distinct from Chrysippus and his utterance."²⁰ For Barnes, the question what the *lekta* are apart from what they do, and how they might fit into a materialist system has no traction. The incorporeals are simply non-bodies, the *lekta* are simply *what is said* and no further ontological analysis is required.

¹⁷ 1977: xiv

¹⁸ op. cit., n. 24, p. 25. Interestingly, the passage Hahm cites at the end of this quotation is Seneca, *Ep.* 58.12, where Seneca introduces not the canonical incorporeals but Centaurs and Giants instead. This goes to show just how tangled the threads of Stoic scholarship are, as I was saying. It is true that one would expect incorporeals to figure in the schema Seneca is providing here, but they do not. The fact that Hahm takes this passage as evidence for the incorporeals anyway, and on that basis takes Something as a mere face-saving device for incorporeals shows just how deep the assumption of Stoic incoherence runs.

¹⁹ 1994: 109-128

²⁰ 1999: 211

Indeed, one might object that it's already quite tidy to say that the Stoics recognized bodies as the real entities that there are, but that in addition they recognized certain entities that are not bodies. There need be no further unifying principle that makes these entities members of some natural kind, and to seek one is to go and create trouble. Rather, the incorporeals are just: not bodies. But if so, one wonders in what Stoic physicalism or materialism consists. If it's just that only bodies are really real but in addition there are certain things that are not bodies, without any further account of what makes them real despite not being bodies, then the Stoics don't look much like competent physicalists. They look rather like lazy or otherwise incompetent thinkers who tried for a materialist system but gave up. But there is ample of evidence to establish firmly that the Stoics *did* have such ontological concerns, and thus that an answer to what it means to be Something, what the incorporeals had in common *qua* incorporeal, and what it means to say that these entities subsist, might be had. I rehearsed all these views to show how deep the presumption runs that the Stoics were metaphysical bumblerers. We will see this unfortunate assumption play out in the details of each chapter, in views that run the gamut from hostile to sheepish to indifferent. If I am right about the Stoic ontology, we can identify guiding principles that underwrite Something as the highest genus, and give content to the notions of subsistence and incorporeality within a materialist framework, thereby eroding the deeply engrained assumption that Stoicism is inherently misguided.

Not surprisingly, interpretations of the Stoic term subsistence (*hupostasis*) have varied widely in the scholarship. It is an important thread to untangle because it is clear the Stoics used it as a technical term in contrast to the reality of bodies, which exist (also a technical term). But, again, little is agreed about subsistence except that it is contrasted with corporeal existence. Long & Sedley have likened Stoic subsistence to Meinong's *bestehen*, rendered by Bertrand Russell as *subsistence*.²¹ Others take subsistence to be a mind-dependent or subjective mode of reality, rendering the incorporeals unreal.²² Sometimes, the incorporeals are thought of as a condition of intelligibility of the universe.²³ In some cases this role leads to a Kantian interpretation, parsing the incorporeals (which do indeed include time and space) as a function of the human mind.²⁴ Other times it leads to the opposite interpretation of the incorporeals, as objective and on equal ontological footing with bodies,²⁵ a surprising result for staunch materialist. So while everyone agrees that what subsists does not exist as a body, there is clearly no consensus on a positive account of *hupostasis*. The matter is complicated by another thread in the Stoic tapestry, so to speak: the term *huparxis*, which is also adopted by the Stoics as a technical term. For this term, translations vary widely: *existence, being real, being the case, being actual, holding, obtaining*. The Stoics use this term only in the domains of time and sayables, saying that only the present *huparchein* while past and future subsist (*huphistanai*); and to describe true *lekta*, including predicates that hold or obtain. I will address the details of this debate when I come to those incorporeals, but bring it up here to forecast the intricacy of the issues involved.

²¹ 1987: 164

²² e.g., Bréhier (1928: 12, 16, 21-2); Christensen (1962: 25, 46); Andreas Graeser (1978: 95); Watson (1966: 12, 38, 83)

²³ e.g., Brunschwig (2003: 219)

²⁴ e.g., Bréhier (1928: 60 ff.)

²⁵ e.g., Marcelo D. Boeri, "The Stoics on Bodies and Incorporeals," *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Jun., 2001), pp. 723-752

Another matter of controversy concerning the Stoic ontology is whether the division of Something into corporeal and incorporeal is complete. Long & Sedley have suggested that in fact the Stoics had a tripartite ontology, with Something dividing into bodies, incorporeals and a third category, which is neither corporeal nor incorporeal; this third category includes figments such as Centaurs and Giants, and mathematical limits.²⁶ I will argue in support of the tripartite ontology, that Something divides into what exists and what subsists according to two logical criteria of reality; and that the Stoics recognized not just one but two kinds of subsistence: that of the incorporeals, which I call subsistence according to body, and that of what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, subsistence according to thought. This distinction has gone unnoticed in the literature; if I am right about it, there is a clear, principled reason to accept a tripartite ontology on behalf of the Stoics.

The possibility that the Stoics recognized a third kind of Something is tangled up with another long-standing puzzle: whether in addition to Something, the Stoics also recognized a category of entities called Not-Somethings (*outina*) between Something and nothing at all, “relegated to a metaphysical limbo.”²⁷ Now, it is undeniable that a category of entities between Something and nothing at all makes Something incoherent as the supreme genus of reality, because Something then is not highest or comprehensive. Yet it is orthodoxy in the scholarship that the Stoics did recognize this bastard category of Not-Somethings,²⁸ which is further testament to how deep the assumption of Stoic incompetence runs. Jacques Brunschwig tries to patch up the difficulty by proposing we think of Something in a broad sense, which does include Not-Somethings and a strict sense that doesn’t: “we could still bring them together with the full-fledged somethings under the common heading ‘something’, but taken in a broad or rather equivocal sense: ‘everything is something’ indeed, but sometimes we get the fakes and sometimes the genuine article.”²⁹ It’s a valiant effort on Brunschwig’s part, but itself *ad hoc* and not enough to salvage Something from incoherence. Now, the candidates for Not-Somethings are typically figments, limits, concepts (*ennoēmata*), and what they called *the all (to pan)*. The tripartite ontology I advocate accommodates figments, limits and the all, and is free to reject concepts as nothing at all.³⁰ So there is no longer any good reason to think the Stoics undid all their hard won progress with Something by throwing in Not-Somethings. Of course, if one thinks Something is already a hot *ad hoc* mess, so to speak, then what difference does the addition of Not-Somethings make?

My objective, as I hope has become clear, is to show that the Stoics led with their ontology and in so doing carved out the next generation of physicalism, which turns out to be surprisingly modern-minded and elegant. Once we clear the area of the core assumption that the Stoics were hopelessly confused, we can offer a reconstruction that does justice to their core materialist commitment to bodies as the only independently existing entities, as well as to their recognition of certain intelligible entities within a physicalist framework. Indeed, the Stoic innovation was the idea that *immaterial* and *physical* are not exclusive domains; rather, we have independently existing material

²⁶ 1987: 163-165

²⁷ *op. cit.*: 181

²⁸ So much so that I will just cite the notable exception: Caston (1999)

²⁹ 2003: 226

³⁰ In fact, I take my ontology to be compatible with Victor Caston’s unorthodox view that concepts were Something after all. With Caston, I reject the category of Not-Somethings; but I remain open as to whether concepts are nothing at all or Something. I find Caston’s picture very compelling, but it may be more economical to say that concepts are simply nothing at all. I will therefore not engage with the complicated and interesting textual evidence concerning concepts (Stob. 1.136,21-137,6 (30A); DL 7.60-1 (30C)).

entities, i.e., tangible bodies, but also immaterial entities that are not tangible or visible but intelligible, real and physical in virtue of their dependence on body. Thus I agree with Bréhier that the Stoics were taking materialism to its logical conclusion,³¹ but disagree strongly that in the Stoic school philosophy, as such, makes no progress.³²

³¹ 1928: 7

³² 1951: 272, *ap.* Watson (1966: n.3, p. 10)

II

The Stoic Innovation: Two Criteria of Reality

Just about all scholars have noticed a similarity between the Stoics and the Giants of Plato's *Sophist*. The famous battle of Gods and Giants in that dialogue sketches a debate between friends of the Forms and materialists, both of whom make fatal concessions to the other. Given the agreed-upon definition of *being* as what can act or be acted upon,³³ the Gods must concede that Forms (antithetically) are changeable after all; while the Giants must concede (antithetically) that there are non-corporeal realities. Certainly the Stoics are more like the Giants than the Gods in their materialist commitments, but most scholars have concluded that the Stoics are no more than eager but equally failed Giants. However, Jacques Brunschwig has argued elegantly and convincingly³⁴ that the Stoics developed their ontology by following the path not taken in Plato's *Sophist*. The Stoic solution is to forge two criteria of reality instead of one: a strong, corporeal criterion for existence, and a second, weaker criterion for non-existing reality, i.e., subsistence. Working in relative independence,³⁵ these two criteria determine what counts as Something (*ti*), the Stoics' highest genus of being. Yet the genus Something is no mere patchwork of the Gods and Giants. Rather, it is a principled analysis of objective reality on physicalist terms. Thus I disagree with Hahn that "Stoic corporealism cannot easily be explained in terms of the general evolution of ontological speculation."³⁶

II.1 The Existence Criterion

What can act or be acted upon is always a body for the Stoics, as for Plato's Giants, though for the Stoics body is not *defined* as what can act or be acted upon. Body is strictly speaking solid three-dimensional extension³⁷ with resistance.³⁸ Note that the definition of body is not given in terms of weight, which one might expect for friends of the Giants who embrace only what can be squeezed in the hand.³⁹ This is no oversight by the Stoics, since they take fire and air to be weightless, and thus the world as whole not to have weight because these components do not.⁴⁰ This is just the beginning of the Stoics' unexpected views. In addition to solidity apart from weight, we will see that the Stoics also recognize extension apart from solidity, which is how they ground the incorporeals as immaterial yet still physical. Not surprisingly, the Stoics are mocked for this view,

³³ Properly, "whatever by nature has the capacity either to do whatever thing to something else or to undergo even the smallest thing by the most insignificant thing, even if only once" (247d9-e2); also, "whenever the capacity to do or undergo even to the smallest degree is present in something" (248c4-5). The capacity to do or undergo, to act or be acted upon are interchangeable translations for the Greek *he tou paschein e dran dunamis* and *eite eis to poiein...eite eis to pathen*, which I will sometimes also call the action/passion criterion

³⁴ 1988

³⁵ Relative, because the non-existent Somethings for which the Stoics are so well known owe their reality to the bodies that underlie or give rise to them. More on this as the chapter unfolds

³⁶ 1977: 9

³⁷ DL 7.135 (45E)

³⁸ Galen, *Qual. inc.* 19.483,13-16 (45F)

³⁹ 248c5-7

⁴⁰ Stob. 1.166,4-22 (49J)

both by ancient commentators like Galen, who takes the Stoics to be “compelled to admit that extension in three dimensions is common to body and void and place;”⁴¹ and by Christensen, who finds it “absurd” to think of the term *extension* as having physical reference.⁴² Brad Inwood, on the other hand, takes extension to have been an additional incorporeal entity independent of place and void, but to my mind causes other problems in so doing. I will address the details of the Stoic view of extension when I address place, room and void. In the meantime, I signal to the reader a knot that needs untangling, namely how to understand the Stoic notion of extension (*diastēma*).

Cicero testifies that Zeno differed from the Platonists and Peripatetics in that “only a body was capable of acting or of being acted upon.”⁴³ Similarly, the Giants are introduced in the *Sophist* as insisting “that only what offers tangible contact is (*einai*), since they define substance (*ousian*) to be the same as body.”⁴⁴ This is the Giants’ strong materialist position from which the more neutral action/passion criterion is extracted as a starting point for both sides (indeed, the action/passion criterion is precisely what the friends of the Forms take as evidence against the Giants’ materialism, and what the Stoics will turn against the Gods); so it’s clear the Giants agree with the Stoics that the action/passion criterion is satisfied only by bodies.

The Stoics and Giants also agree that the action/passion criterion is the measure of existence. The Giants’ position was rendered above as: “only what offers tangible contact *is*.” Though it is perfectly correct to render the infinitive *einai* in this neutral way (as *is*), the fact that there is no predicate complement implies an existential reading of the verb and licenses translation as “only what offers tangible contact *exists*.” Furthermore, the nature of existence is precisely what’s at issue in the battle between Gods and Giants (as in Plato generally).⁴⁵ The fact that the infinitive *einai*, the participial phrase *to on* and the noun *ousia* are used interchangeably demonstrates that for Plato and his characters existence is not the highest genus of reality, but the only one. Hence for the Giants “anything they can’t squeeze in their hands is absolutely nothing.”⁴⁶ And the Gods “insist violently that true being is certain non-bodily forms that can be thought about. They take the bodies of the other group, and also what they call the truth, and they break them up verbally into little bits and call them a process of coming-to-be instead of being.”⁴⁷ Because the Gods agree that existence is the only battleground, the only way for Forms to lay their claim to true being is to banish the other candidate out of reality by calling the corporeal world coming-to-be instead of being.

Thus the Stoics’ famous commitment to bodies as the only things that exist is in fact the result of a carefully constructed syllogism, and this is a genuinely novel philosophical position. As Hahm observes, the Stoic definition of body in terms of extension is borrowed from mathematics, and supplemented with the notion of solidity and resistance to settle the matter of its corporeality.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Galen, *Qual. inc.*, 19.464,10-14 (49E)

⁴² op. cit., p. 29

⁴³ Cicero, *Acad.* 1.39 (45A part). See also Aëtius, *De placitis*, 4.20.2 (SVF 2.387); Aristocles in Eusebius, *Pr. Ev.* 15.14.1 (45G); Cleom., *Cael.* 1.1.66, 1.1.99-100; DL, 7.134 (44B); SE, *M.* 8.263 (45B), *M.* 10.3-4 (49B); Plut., *De comm. not.* 30, 1073E (SVF II, 525)

⁴⁴ 246a8-b

⁴⁵ At 246a the battle is introduced as *peri tēs ousias*

⁴⁶ 248c5-7

⁴⁷ 246b8-c2

⁴⁸ 1977: 10-11

And “[i]f we extract the argument for the existence of bodies, we find it is essentially a simple syllogism: ‘Whatever exists either acts or is acted upon. Nothing can act or be acted upon without body. Therefore, only bodies exist.’”⁴⁹ Thus the Stoics’ first ontological innovation is their respect for the distinction between a criterion (action/passion) and what meets it (bodies), which their predecessors elided by defining body directly as what can act or be acted upon. The Stoics have turned the action/passion criterion against the friends of the Forms to establish their materialism instead.⁵⁰

So, the Stoics are in complete agreement with the Giants that only bodies exist, and that these are the most real of beings⁵¹— “what exists’ is said only of bodies.”⁵² However, this robust existential criterion picks out much more for the Stoics than for the Giants, marking the Stoics’ next ontological innovation. Concerning “justice, intelligence and the rest of virtue” the Giants are “ashamed and don’t dare either to agree that they are not beings or to insist that everything is a body.”⁵³ Having agreed that virtues and the other paradigm cases of Forms are not visible, the Giants are stuck between denying that there are such things as the virtues (an obvious absurdity) and the apparently absurd option of saying such qualities are bodies. The Stoics, however, deny the absurdity of the second option and eagerly confirm that the virtues are corporeal and even perceptible.⁵⁴ Virtue for the Stoics is the body disposed in a certain way. Just as the fragility of glass is a material disposition to behave a certain way under certain circumstances, so too being virtuous is a matter of having a body (i.e., soul, itself a body) disposed to behave a certain way under certain circumstances.⁵⁵ The fist is another, characteristically Stoic example of a disposition: “What is a fist? Neither exactly the same thing as a hand, which is a body, nor a completely different thing, but a hand disposed in a certain way; hence, a body itself.”⁵⁶

We saw that the Stoics don’t just legislate that only bodies exist, but argue for it. Here, too, the Stoics don’t just legislate that the virtues are corporeal, but provide a detailed accounting of corporeal nature. These are the so-called Stoic Categories, full of scholarly knots and ripe for a full treatment of their own (which I cannot give here). According to the Stoics, body can be analyzed into four categories: the substrate (*hupokeimenon*), what is qualified (*poion*), what is disposed (*pós echon*), and what is relatively disposed (*pros ti pós echon*). In the case of the fist, the Stoics would say that its *substrate* is matter; that the hand is *what is qualified*, i.e., matter arranged a certain way; that the fist is the hand *disposed* a certain way; and, finally, that the left fist is *relatively disposed* to the right. There are scholarly debates about every aspect of the schema: whether the Stoic categories correspond in any way to Aristotle’s; how the categories are related to one another, as distinct parts or nested aspects separable only in thought; if the categories should even be considered corporeal, as

⁴⁹ op. cit.: 12

⁵⁰ “This complete inversion of Plato’s argument could take place only on two conditions. First, Plato’s mark of real being had to become accepted in its own right and not as the consequence of an argument presupposing immaterial entities. Secondly, the minor premise ...namely, that only bodies can act and be acted upon, has to be firmly established,” (op. cit.: 12)

⁵¹ *ontós einai* (247e3); and Marcus Aurelius, *Communings with Himself*, 9.1

⁵² Alex., *In Ar. Top.* 301,21-22 (27B part); SE, *M.* 10.3-4 (49B); Stob. 1.138,14-139,4 (55A)

⁵³ 247b1-c2

⁵⁴ DL 7.89 (61A); Galen, *Plac.* 7.1.12-15 (29E); Plut., *Virt. mor.* 440E-441D (61B), *St. rep.* 1042E-F (60R); Seneca, *Ep.* 113.2 (29B), 117.2; Simpl., *In Ar. Cat.*, 217,32 (28L), 212,12-213,1 (28N)

⁵⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 113.24 (61E); see also SE, *PH* 2.81-3 (33P)

⁵⁶ Brunschwig (2003: 212); cf. Cicero, *Acad.* 2.145 (41A), SE, *M.* 2.7 (31E)

opposed to incorporeal; and whether they are objective aspects of the world, ideal or even subjective. For instance, Christensen takes the categories to be incorporeal, and therefore mental constructs without any objective denotation;⁵⁷ in particular, he thinks they are *lekta*,⁵⁸ as do Rist⁵⁹ and Watson.⁶⁰ Others think *substrate* and *qualified* are corporeal, but that *disposed* and *relatively disposed* are incorporeal.⁶¹

It is beyond my scope to engage with these issues in the depth they require,⁶² but I do think my account gives at least *prima facie* reasons to favor the Long & Sedley view that the categories are corporeal and should “be treated as a classification of the metaphysical aspect under which a body can be viewed.”⁶³ This is perhaps like A.C. Lloyd’s idea that the categories are four points of view on an entity.⁶⁴ I will return to these puzzles in the context of *lekta*, which we have already seen confused with the categories. For the time being, it is at least clear that corporeal existence encompasses an unusually broad swath of reality for the Stoics. Whereas the Giants were stymied by the virtues, the Stoics embrace them as corporeal and set off down the path not taken in the *Sophist*.⁶⁵

II.2 The Something Criterion for Subsistence

But the Stoics are not just Giants of broader scope, making more of the world corporeal and leaving it at that.⁶⁶ The Stoics’ next ontological innovation and bigger departure from the Giants is their denial that “anything they can’t squeeze in their hands is absolutely nothing.” In this one move, the Stoics’ thoroughgoing materialism takes on a new and controversial dimension. By saying that what fails the corporeal test can still be Something, the Stoics reject their predecessors’ shared assumption that existence is the only kind of reality. Instead, they say, nature includes not only the many sensible existents they have countenanced but also certain non-existent entities that are not corporeal but nonetheless objectively real and available for thought, i.e., intelligible. Though these entities do not exist in the full-fledged manner of bodies, they nonetheless have a derivative kind of reality the Stoics term subsistence (*hupostasis*).

Again, the Stoic position is not just a conjunction of the Gods’ and Giants’ views. It might seem that countenancing non-corporeal, intelligible entities undoes the Stoics’ hard-won progress toward a purely physicalist analysis of the world; after all, what do the friends of the Forms advocate if not the reality of the intangible? Galen, for one, mocks the Stoics’ distinction between existence and subsistence as “linguistic quibbling” (*tên micrologian ton onomatên*).⁶⁷ But a closer look reveals that

⁵⁷ 1962: 15-16

⁵⁸ op. cit., p. 25

⁵⁹ 1971: 40, 51, 53

⁶⁰ 1966: 49

⁶¹ Pasquale Pasquino argues this way (1978: 342 ff.); see also Brunschwig (2003) and Goldschmidt (1969: 13-25)

⁶² See also the illuminating series of articles by Margaret E. Reesor (1954, 1957, 1972)

⁶³ 1971: 165

⁶⁴ 1971: 65-66

⁶⁵ For difficulties with the virtues *qua* category see Menn (1999: section VI)

⁶⁶ As the indifferent view would have it, e.g., Jonathan Barnes (1999) and Michael Frede (1994: 116)

⁶⁷ *Meth. Med.*, 10.155,1-8 (27G)

the Stoics are not just recasting Forms under another name.⁶⁸ In fact, subsistents are also subject to a physicalist analysis that shows their reality depends entirely on existents. As Nemesius reports, for Chrysippus “Nothing incorporeal is separated from a body.”⁶⁹ So while Stoic subsistents cannot be squeezed in the hand, and do not properly speaking exist, they still have a certain objective, physical reality thanks to those things that can be squeezed.

The difficulty is in pinpointing what exactly it means to be Something non-existent, subsistent and physical. Translations of the Greek *hupostasis* (noun) and *huphestanai* (verb) vary widely, though *subsistence* (and *to subsist*) is the dominant translation; alternatives include *substance*,⁷⁰ *potential reality*,⁷¹ *existence placed in simple thought* (i.e., mind-dependent reality),⁷² or even just *existence of some kind*.⁷³ Further, as I mentioned in Chapter I, *hupostasis* is often equated with *huparxis*, which is itself a difficult technical term for the Stoics; for example, Watson un-self-consciously renders *huparchein* as *subsists*;⁷⁴ Pasquino says all incorporeals *huparchein*,⁷⁵ and Hahm translates *hupostasis* as *substance*.⁷⁶ It’s true that in ordinary usage *huphestanai* and *huparchein* are close in meaning, and can both be rendered by *exists*. However, to render the incorporeals as *existing*, when it is well established that for the Stoics only bodies exist, is to ignore the Stoics’ technical use of their terms. In discussing *time* and the *lekta*, I will return to *huparxis*. In the meantime, I will focus on subsistence and what it means to be Something non-existent and incorporeal. I will argue that *hupostasis* captures a derivative mode of reality for entities that are intelligible (as opposed to sensible, i.e., visible, tangible, etc.) yet still physical because they are dependent on body for the reality they do have.

Now, if Jacques Brunschwig is right that the concept of non-existent Somethings was a principled response to the Battle of Gods and Giants in Plato’s *Sophist*, there should be some criterion that delineates such a genus prior to its species.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, the weaker Something criterion for intelligible reality is much less well attested than the existence criterion; indeed, Brunschwig is the only one to have suggested there may be such a criterion in play. My contribution is that this criterion in fact consists of two elements: a logical measure of objectivity and a test for particularity, which I will now proceed to work out. It is a commonplace that the Stoics countenance only objective particulars, excluding universals like Plato’s Forms on the basis of their generality, so it makes sense that the Something criterion would break down into these two elements of objectivity and particularity. On the other hand, the commonplace that the Stoics countenance only individuals or particulars typically applies to their commitment to bodies, not necessarily to the domain of non-existent Somethings. While Brunschwig assumes the Stoics’ commitment to objective particulars extends to all entities in their ontology, others⁷⁸ do not; and no one (to my knowledge) has argued for a precise way to take the Stoics’ non-existent Somethings as objective particulars, consistent with their other physicalist commitments. I will now go on to describe the

⁶⁸ See Caston (1999) for an extended argument that the Stoics are eliminativists, not reductionists, about Forms

⁶⁹ 81,6-10 (45D); see also Marcus Aurelius, *Communings with Himself*, 9.1

⁷⁰ Hahm (1977: 18)

⁷¹ Tzamalikos (1991: 540)

⁷² As Victor Goldschmidt characterizes (1972: 341)

⁷³ e.g., Graeser (1972: 90; 1978: 81, where he says that incorporeals “somehow exist”)

⁷⁴ 1966: 54

⁷⁵ 1978: 345

⁷⁶ 1977: 18

⁷⁷ As he points out (1988: 26)

⁷⁸ e.g., A.A. Long (1971), LS (1987: 164)

Something criterion as having two parts: a measure of objectivity and another for particularity. If I am right, then we will have an account of what it means to be *Something*. After that, I will explore the mode of subsistence common to incorporeals, then introduce a second mode of subsistence according to thought (*kat' epinoian*), which underwrites Long & Sedley's posit of a third category of what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal. The result is a Stoic ontology that is principled, coherent and comprehensive.

II.2a A Logical Measure of Objectivity

The first element of the Something criterion is being a proper object of thought, or the referent of genuinely significant discourse, as Long & Sedley put the point.⁷⁹ I will sometimes call this the thinkability criterion, by which I mean that availability for thought is a logical measure of Something's objectivity, not a point about its provenance. The thinkability criterion does not equate subsistence with being a *product* of thought, but rather restricts the domain to those entities that are available *to* thought such that anyone can think about them. Thus availability to thought is not a criterion for mind-dependence but quite the opposite—it is a logical measure of objectivity because being a *proper* object of thought means being equally available to any thinker, i.e., publicly or intersubjectively.⁸⁰ Indeed, as Brunschwig says, to be Something is to have extra-mental reality.⁸¹

Corporeal entities pass this test straightforwardly; of course something material and thus sensible is a proper object of thought and discourse—anyone can see and therefore think about a tree, for example. But the criterion for subsistence is weaker, setting a minimum threshold for being Something—it is a test for intelligible, not sensible, reality. One piece of evidence that availability for thought is criterial for being Something comes from Sextus Empiricus:

- A) If something is taught, either it will be taught through not-somethings (*outinôn*) or through somethings (*tinôn*). But it cannot be taught through not-somethings; for these have no subsistence for the mind (*anhypostata...teî dianoiâ*), according to the Stoics.⁸²

There are several things to notice in this passage. First, being Something is a *yes or no* question, not a matter of degree; and this *yes or no* question is exhaustive of the matter—otherwise the Stoics could not divide the issue so neatly between Somethings and *outina*. My point is contentious to the extent that many scholars take the Stoics to have posited not only Somethings but also a distinct category of Not-Somethings that do not equate to nothing at all. But whatever we go on to make of the *no* option is strictly speaking irrelevant to the *yes or no* question here.⁸³ So, the second thing to notice in the Sextus passage is that whatever we make of *outina* (whether nothing at all or failing to be Something in a weaker way, as Not-Somethings), it is clear that they are not

⁷⁹ 1987: 164; note, however, that my analysis will not agree with LS that Stoic subsistence captures Meinong's mode of being that called *bestehen*

⁸⁰ As Brunschwig says, sheepishly: "Intersubjectivity is at least a step toward objectivity" (2003: 218)

⁸¹ 1988: 77, 79

⁸² *M.* 1.17 (27C)

⁸³ I will address the false category of Not-Somethings in Chapter V, once I have prepared the necessary ground. For the time being I will assume that *outina* are really nothing at all for the Stoics, as Victor Caston (1999) has argued at length. I will use the Greek *outi* or *outina* to indicate the neutral position, prior to its interpretation as nothing at all vs. the intermediate class of Not-Somethings

proper objects of thought. To say that they have no subsistence for the mind is just to say that they are not objectively available for thought. Therefore and thirdly, if *outina* cannot be proper objects of thought, it follows that whatever *can* be thought won't be *outi*. Even for those who posit an intermediate category of Not-Somethings, denying that *outina* can be thought amounts to a positive criterion for being Something. The negation of *outi* can be read only two ways if you posit the category Not-Something: either it's equivalent to Something or to nothing at all. But taking the negation of *outi* in the second way would yield the absurd result that whatever can be thought is nothing at all. So even the advocate of Not-Somethings must admit that having subsistence for the mind is criterial for being Something.

A second piece of evidence that the Stoics operated in terms of availability for thought can be found in the following famously perplexing passage, also from Sextus Empiricus.

- B) For they [the Stoics] say, just as the trainer or drill-sergeant sometimes takes hold of the boy's hands to drill him and to teach him to make certain motions, but sometimes stands at a distance and moves to a certain drill, to provide himself as a model (*pros mimésin*) for the boy — so too some impressors touch, as it were, and make contact with the commanding faculty (*hégemonikon*) to make their printing in it, as do white and black, and body in general; whereas others have a nature like that of the incorporeal sayables (*lekta*), and the commanding faculty is impressed in relation to them (*ep' autois*), not by them (*ouk hup' auton*).⁸⁴

The impressors that touch the commanding faculty are corporeal, as one would expect given that only bodies can act or be acted upon; this type of agency is captured by the preposition *hupo*. In contrast, the impressors with a nature like the incorporeal *lekta* do not pass the action/passion test and thus do not make physical contact with the soul. Nonetheless, they are *bona fide* impressors, i.e., proper objects of thought and discourse, which is captured by the preposition *epi*. The distinction between sensible and intelligible impressors in this passage is unambiguous, thus lending support to the idea that the Stoics took availability for thought, i.e., the commanding faculty's ability to be impressed in relation to (*epi*) Something, as a measure of objective reality. Another passage confirms the Stoic commitment to intelligible, or non-sensory impressors, if there were any real doubt:⁸⁵

- C) They divide impressions into those which are sensory (*aisthêtikai*) and those which are not. Sensory impressions are ones obtained through one or more sense-organs, non-sensory are ones obtained through thought such as those of the incorporeals and of the other things acquired by reason.⁸⁶

This principle of objective intelligibility as guide to reality shows up throughout the Stoic corpus. For example, in the context of Stoic logic, Sextus tells us the following:

- D) But one [an argument] like "If sweat flows through the surface, there are ducts discoverable by thought. But sweat flows through the surface. Therefore there are ducts discoverable by thought" is demonstrative, having the non-evident conclusion "Therefore there are ducts discoverable by thought."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ M. 8.409 (27E)

⁸⁵ As perhaps Graeser has (1978: 81), where he says that only three-dimensional solid bodies can make impressions, which is clearly incorrect in the light of these passages.

⁸⁶ DL 7.51 (39A4)

⁸⁷ SE, PH 2.140 (36B7)

What is discoverable by thought here is a true conclusion, i.e., what is the case, which is of course objective. It is also likely the Stoics operated with such a principle, given the prominent place of signs (*semeia*) in their dialectic.⁸⁸ A sign is something that enters into reasoning of the form: where there's smoke, there's fire. Smoke is a sign of fire because of its objective causal connection in the world, not because it conjures fire for us when we think of it. Gerard Verbeke says: "The sign is thus a reality that, thanks to its ties with other objects, allows one to go beyond the boundaries of what it is, and to reveal to thought things that do not offer themselves directly to our awareness and that might never show themselves before our eyes."⁸⁹ Similar reasoning is applied in the Stoics' proof that the soul is a body and, as Menn points out, when we infer by reason that when there is alteration there is motion.⁹⁰ Thus availability for thought is consistently testament to objective reality in our evidence of Stoic thinking.

One might worry that acknowledging non-sensory impressors as objective entities violates the action/passion principle in that the incorporeals are making an impression (which is a corporeal alteration), and thus acting on something.⁹¹ Or the opposite worry that because they cannot act or be acted upon, the incorporeals are in fact useless.⁹² However, as Brunschwig has pointed out,⁹³ in a case where one is impressed *in relation to* (*epi*) an incorporeal, the commanding faculty of the soul (*hégemonikon*) can be considered the agent responsible for the corporeal alteration, rather than the incorporeal itself. In fact, the Stoics had a special term for the way we conceive of incorporeals: *metabasis*, which we typically translate *transition*. Verbeke explains the notion of *metabasis* as going beyond the given, in line with the quotation above and the *hégemonikon* as corporeal agent. The crucial thing to remember is that not just any going beyond the given will do, it has to be going beyond the given to what is objectively there but not directly accessible. A case of going beyond the given to what is not the case does not count as *metabasis*, but as an activity of the *phantastikon*, i.e., the imagination. Thus the *hégemonikon* acting as agent assures both that the incorporeals do not violate the action/passion principle, and that they are not useless as intelligible impressors because of their inability to make contact. At the same time, the *hégemonikon* as agent does not make the incorporeals mind-dependent, either in a Kantian sense or a subjective sense; rather, the *hégemonikon* can be impressed *in relation to* (*epi*) incorporeals precisely because of their objective extra-mental reality.

It is essential to keep in mind the distinction between conceiving of something, i.e., coming to think about it, and inventing. The case of the drill sergeant is a good reminder: what has a nature like that of the incorporeal *lekta*, we are told, is the drill sergeant's pattern or model. There is no one pattern there physically, and the boy is not inventing the pattern he conceives of by transition (*metabasis*).⁹⁴ Rather, it is an objective feature of the world that is available for thought and discourse. Watson sees, rightly, that Something "includes all that can be talked about, whether it has actual physical existence or not;"⁹⁵ but we need not follow him in thinking that the position is forced on

⁸⁸ The status of *semeia* is another prominent tangle in Stoic scholarship, which I cannot adjudicate here; Long argues nicely (1971) that these entities should be considered *lekta*

⁸⁹ 1978: 261

⁹⁰ 1999: 244

⁹¹ As Barnes does (1999: 210)

⁹² e.g., Kahn (1959: 167)

⁹³ 1988: section III

⁹⁴ I will address *metabasis* in Chapter III, section 3 on the *lekton*

⁹⁵ 1966: 50

them by problems with *lekta*. Likewise with Hahm, we can agree that Something is motivated by a desire to talk and think about things with no substantial, i.e., corporeal, existence, without having to say that Something was a face-saving device. J.M. Rist credits the Stoics with partly grasping (and thus being motivated by) problems about “fictional or otherwise non-existent nameables,”⁹⁶ which we can improve on by saying they not only grasped the problems but took them head on by making objective availability for thought criterial for subsistence, a sort of logical test. If it’s the kind of thing we can refer to, say things about and quantify over then it’s Something.

One might now have the further concern that the criterion is circular, but it isn’t. It’s not being conceived or thought about that *makes* something real; rather, it’s being real that makes something available for thought.⁹⁷ The epistemic question, how do we know when we have conceived of something that is really there rather than imagining things, is a separate matter. Even if we were doomed to poor thought unable to grasp things as they are, it remains perfectly true that whatever is objectively real will in principle be *available* to thought, either by direct apprehension or by inference. In application, the thinkability criterion is subject to the normative constraints of Stoic epistemology and to the fallibility of our thought. In principle, thought can measure just what’s there to be thought about (as opposed to invented), though not necessarily all there is to be thought about (which is reserved for god, who does think about everything there is).

Thus I take availability for thought, i.e., the soul’s ability to be impressed in relation to something, to be a logical measure of objectivity according to the Stoics. I will now turn to the second aspect of the Something criterion: particularity.

II.2b Particularity

There is good textual evidence⁹⁸ and a long scholarly tradition⁹⁹ that the Stoics countenance an ontology of particulars. Indeed, this is why the Stoics are so often cast as the first nominalists. But most assume this particularity to extend only to bodies; for instance, A.A. Long says that a “particular in Stoic ontology is a material object which has definite shape as the necessary and sufficient condition of its existence.”¹⁰⁰ Others, like Brunschwig, see all Somethings as particulars,¹⁰¹ but leave the particularity of non-existent Somethings open as something we can settle in principle.¹⁰² The Greek *ti* is sometimes rendered as *the indefinite Something*,¹⁰³ and Brunschwig talks of indeterminate particularity of *ti* as opposed to *tode* (this). It’s certainly not obvious in what the

⁹⁶ 1971: 40

⁹⁷ I this spirit Christensen says “Whatever exists is a possible object of inquiry” (1962: 16); also Graeser (1978: 81), “For to exist is, according to Stoic ontology, to be capable of prompting a rational presentation, one that can be articulated in speech.” Unfortunately, both are wrong to limit this domain to what exists, but the idea that the thinkability was criterial for reality is clearly in play

⁹⁸ Syrianus, *In. Ar. Met.* 104,17-21 (30G); Alex., *In. Ar. Top.* 359, 12-16 (30D); SE, *M.* 11.8-11 (30I)

⁹⁹ e.g., Brunschwig (1988, 2003); Caston *et al.*, cf. in (1999: n.1, 145); LS (1987: 164, 181-2); Sellars (2006: 84); Watson (1966); Mates (1961: 32)

¹⁰⁰ e.g. A.A. Long (1971: 75-6)

¹⁰¹ 2003: 220

¹⁰² For example, concerning the sayables he says “Que les *lekta* soient particuliers, cela ne fait pas l’ombre d’un doute, encore qu’il soit assez difficile de saisir en quoi consiste leur particularité” (1988: 92)

¹⁰³ Mates (1962: 18)

particularity of non-existent Somethings consists, or what Stoic nominalism amounts to. Bréhier says that Stoic nominalism is a result of their physics, not logic;¹⁰⁴ I suggest it is both, namely a physics guided by logical principles. Given their commitment to the cosmos as precisely that—matter infused with divine logos—it is no surprise that the Stoics should operate similarly in constructing their philosophical system. A principled ontology guides and infuses the unfolding of Stoics physics, ethics and logic; this, as I was saying, explains why the ontology (metaphysics) is not singled out as a distinct part of the egg to which they compare philosophy, and thus why it has been so hard to discern clearly.

I will begin with some terminological observations about the term *particular*, then turn to textual evidence that the Stoics recognized a logical measure of particularity. Being a particular (*kath' hekaston, tode ti*) is a matter of being an individual, as opposed to a universal.¹⁰⁵ Particulars are fully determinate entities as opposed to Plato's Forms or the generic Average Man with 2.4 children.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, talk of kinds is always reducible to talk of tokens so that statements like "Man is a rational mortal animal" translates without loss of meaning to the universally quantified proposition "If something is a man, that thing is a rational animal."¹⁰⁷ So while it is acceptable to characterize Stoic particulars as tokens, it is important to remember that such talk does not bring with it a corresponding realism about types. For the Stoics all there is are individual tokens, and in this respect they are rightly called nominalists.

Jacques Brunschwig has suggested that the Stoics' famous Not-Someone argument against Platonic Forms is a test for reality, one that screens for particularity in terms of basic laws of logic.

- E) (1) Indeed, Chrysippus too raises problems as to whether the Idea is to be called a "this Something" (*tode ti*). (2) One must also take into account the Stoics' custom concerning generically qualified things—how according to them cases (*ptoseis*) are expressed, in their

¹⁰⁴ 1928: 10

¹⁰⁵ While being a concrete or pure particular (that is spatio-temporally continuous and therefore not multiply located) is one way of being an individual, and pure universals like Platonic Forms are never individuals for the Stoics, this dichotomy is not exhaustive; there is also room in the Stoic ontology (as there is for Peter Strawson, *Individuals*, Methuen (1959)) for abstract individuals that are multiply located and not spatio-temporally continuous though still, as Strawson would say, substance-dependent and therefore physical. The body-less incorporeals, as I will show, are pure particulars in that their determinacy is spatio-temporally continuous. However, as I argue in Chapter IV, the Stoics recognized a third category of Something, which they characterize as *neither corporeal nor incorporeal*, which includes figments (such as Centaurs and Giants) and mathematical limits (such as surface, line and point). Note that I have purposely avoided characterizing the debate in terms of the identity of indiscernibles, though it is central to the conventional distinction between particulars and universals and to the status of abstract entities as individuals. I have avoided it because the Stoics are committed to a uniquely individuating quality (*idion poion*) in virtue of which pure particulars will always be discernible; thus they would not characterize pure particulars as failing the identity of indiscernibles test. Nonetheless, they would agree with the spirit of the observation that pure particulars are not identical when they are indiscernible, as in the case of identical neckties. The issue is further complicated by the Stoics' commitment to everlasting recurrence according to which the world repeats itself eternally. It is a matter of debate whether each iteration of the cosmos is numerically identical, indiscernible or merely type identical but with certain distinguishable differences. The Stoics were the first to endorse the identity of indiscernibles, so the way in which each cosmos is *just like* the last has far-reaching theoretical consequences. It is relevant to their understanding of body-less time (defined as the temporal extension (*diastēma*) of the world's change), as well as for personal identity across worlds and the *lekta*, or sayables—roughly the meanings of our words; indeed, the Stoics are arguably the first to conceive of possible worlds and to posit Twin Earth-style thought experiments.

¹⁰⁶ To borrow an LS example (1987: 181)

¹⁰⁷ SE, *M.* 11.8-11 (30I)

school how universals (*ta koina*) are called not-somethings (*outina*), and how their ignorance of the fact that not every substance signifies a “this Something” (*tode ti*) gives rise to the Not-Someone sophism, which relies on the form of expression. (3) Namely, “if someone is in Athens, he is not in Megara; <but man is in Athens; therefore man is not in Megara.>” (4) For, man is not Someone (*ou tis*); for the universal is not Something; but we took him as Something (*hos tina*) in the argument, and that is why the argument has this name, being called the Not-someone argument.¹⁰⁸

Here, as with thinkability, the criterion is logical and not causal. Our ability to think about Something is not constitutive of its objectivity, but it is an excellent measure. Likewise, passing the Not-Someone, or *outis*, test is not explanatory of an entity’s particularity, but indicative of it. Now, it’s obvious how individuals like Socrates pass the *outis* test, especially in contradistinction to a universal like Man that obviously is in Megara and Athens at once. But the particularity of non-existent Somethings has remained unclear,¹⁰⁹ or has been rejected as applicable only to bodies. My suggestion is that each and every thing that is Something is an individual, i.e., a particular, and that this is the grain of truth in labeling the Stoics as nominalists. How so is best illustrated in application to the immaterial Somethings case by case; if it can be applied to all the Stoics’ non-existent entities, then this aspect of the Something criterion is confirmed.

I should add, however, that Victor Caston is pessimistic about the matter: “Attempts to extract a criterion for ‘not-somethings’ from this argument have failed,” he says in reference to Brunschwig (and his treatment of void in particular).¹¹⁰ Caston argues that the need for *ad hoc* restrictions in application to the incorporeals shows that the test is not a genuine criterion. However it is important to note that Brunschwig does not put the *outis* test forth as a criterion for Not-Somethings, but as a positive criterion for Somethings. I will therefore persevere and show that the test can be applied without *ad hoc* restrictions. The upshot is that the Stoics’ commitment to objective particulars goes well beyond the familiar Stoic thesis that only bodies exist. In fact, the lesson of the Not-Someone argument is that everything there is (anything that’s Something) will be an individual in space-time: a non-repeatable entity that cannot be located more than one place at a time. The nominalist label is therefore accurate insofar as the Stoics take everything there is to be located somewhere and therefore to be physical, even if not material.

Thus the idea that Something is a mere label slapped on later to save face after admitting entities they couldn’t cram into the material mold, however expanded, is not warranted and we can begin to erode at this long-standing assumption.¹¹¹ Certainly it’s true that the Stoics were concerned to recognize intelligible reality within a physicalist system—that’s precisely what makes them different from the giants in Plato’s *Sophist*. If the Stoics were responding to the long-standing problems described by Plato, it would stand to reason that they identified principles according to

¹⁰⁸ Simpl., *In. Ar. Cat.* 105,8-16 (30E)

¹⁰⁹ Especially in the case of the Stoics’ hallmark Sayables (*lekta*). Yet, as Brunschwig says, “That *lekta* are particulars is beyond the shadow of a doubt, even if it is quite difficult to grasp that in which their particularity consists,” (1988: 92). Though he goes on to sketch the landscape of the question, Brunschwig does not pursue an answer; he is content knowing that the particularity of *lekta* can be adjudicated in principle.

¹¹⁰ 1999: 159; Caston is right to worry, as the argument is easy to misread. Michael Frede, for example, wrongly understands the argument to confirm cases (*ptōseis*) are Something because they are in both places at once, which is completely counter to the reading required for the argument to work against Forms (1994: 124)

¹¹¹ Hence I agree with Rist, contra Zeller, that *ti* is an original classification and not some later modification (1971: 41-3)

which they could thread the needle between flat-footed materialism and other-worldly idealism. I propose the Stoics had on offer ontological principles that allow them to countenance intelligible entities without violating their commitment to bodies as the only independently existing things there are and foundation of everything there is. If there were no bodies, there would be nothing at all for the Stoics.

The result so far is that to *subsist* is to be a proper object of thought and discourse, an objective particular that meets what I have called the Something criterion. The objectivity of such entities is measured by their availability for thought and discourse; while their particularity is tested by the Not-Someone argument. If I am right about this Something criterion, then the Stoic ontology may be a principled system after all, and not some *ad hoc* construction cobbled together to handle a collection of left-over entities that can't be forced into the corporeal mold. However, even if all Stoic entities meet the Something criterion, there is no guarantee that they constitute a coherent physicalist system. For instance, it remains open whether the incorporeals all subsist according to a common principle; and, in fact, interpretations of Stoic incorporeals vary widely in the scholarship.

My thesis is that in addition to the Something criterion that applies to all Stoic subsistents, the incorporeals can each be understood as *body-less*:¹¹² entities that depend on body without themselves being bodies, much like the flow of traffic depends on cars without being reducible to the cars that give rise to it. The flow of traffic is a proper object of thought and discourse—we can say true and false things about it, like that it is slow or fast; and it is objectively available for anyone to think about. In addition, such an entity will pass the Not-Someone test for particularity: the flow of traffic on the Bay Bridge cannot be the same flow of traffic as that on the Golden Gate Bridge. They might both be slow, stop-and-go, smooth, or fast; but just as my car cannot at the same time be on the Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge, so too the flow of traffic arising from cars on one bridge cannot be the same as that on another bridge. If a certain flow of traffic arises from cars in Athens, then it cannot be in Megara.

In the next chapter I will apply this treatment to each of the canonical incorporeals to show that the criterion applies consistently and helps dissolve long-standing puzzles that have made the Stoic system so disjointed.

¹¹² To borrow the phrase from LS (1987: 200)

III

Incorporeals: Subsistence According to Body

The Stoics' canonical incorporeals—place, void, time and sayables (*lekta*),¹¹³ are also their canonical subsistents. So I will begin with a general accounting of the phenomenon of incorporeal subsistence, and then systematically apply both aspects of the Something criterion to the canonical incorporeals: thinkability as a measure of objectivity and the *outis* test as a measure of particularity. Taking stock, we know that the Stoics' ontological innovation was in crafting two relatively independent criteria of reality instead of just one. Now, the point of saying they are only relatively independent is that the Stoics were interested in making room for intelligible reality, which had so stymied Plato's Giants, within a physicalist ontology. We also saw that the Stoic incorporeals are stripped of their causal efficacy in that they do not meet the action/passion criterion for existence, but they are nonetheless the sort of thing *in relation to which* the commanding faculty can be impressed. The lesson of the drill sergeant, in passage B above, was that the Stoics recognized two kinds of impressors, thus two kinds of objective reality: sensible and intelligible. The lesson of the current chapter will be that Stoic incorporeals are intelligible, objective particulars entirely dependent on body. Thus the Stoics are not just Gods of narrower scope recasting Forms under another name and hoping no one will notice.

What's different about the Stoics' intangible realities as opposed to the Forms is that they are dependent on the corporeal world for their reality, stripped of causal efficacy without losing their status as impressors. And this is no mere linguistic quibble, as Galen would have it. The nature of the incorporeals' dependence on body is best illustrated by the particular cases, but it would not be amiss to say by way of general characterization that the subsistence of Stoic incorporeals is akin to the contemporary notion of supervenience, according to which any change in the underlying body entails a change in the supervening entity. But it is no merely logical relationship. Indeed, while the Something criterion is a logical measure of reality, it is not a genetic or causal account of what sorts of things meet the criterion and how. For the Stoics the supervening entity is in some sense caused by the underlying body, and is thus *epiphenomenal* in lacking causal efficacy. I cannot here go into the detail it would take to align these concepts properly, so I offer the term *supervenience* as a general landmark to orient the reader.¹¹⁴ The term brings out the essential fact that Stoic incorporeals do not subsist independently; if all bodies were eliminated, everything would thereby be eliminated.

Another way to put the point is to say that being incorporeal is best thought of as being body-less,¹¹⁵ in the sense that the drill sergeant's model is an entity distinct from yet dependent on the corporeal motions that give rise to it. Similarly, the flow of traffic is something distinct from but entirely dependent on the cars that underlie it; it is, so to speak, what's left over when you bracket the corporeal. Speaking this way makes the position seem more metaphorical than metaphysical, and, worse, perhaps even subjective, but Stoic incorporeals are objective furnishings of an austere physicalist ontology. It is physicalist in that not all entities are themselves bodies, but everything

¹¹³ SE, M. 10, 218 (27D)

¹¹⁴ For an example of what it would take to do the job properly, see Victor Caston's treatment of Aristotle in "Epiphenomenalisms, Ancient and Modern," *Philosophical Review*, vol. 106, no. 3, pp. 309-363

¹¹⁵ To borrow the phrase from LS, p. 200

there is depends in one way or another on body. That the incorporeals are not mere metaphor or subjective entities is evidenced by the fact that the Stoics define body as three-dimensional solid extension,¹¹⁶ and the point of specifying its solidity is that they recognize three-dimensional extension *without* body as well.¹¹⁷ This latter phenomenon subsists according to solid extension and is thus physical despite lacking body (it is physical but not material, one could say). In the case of the drill sergeant, the model he provides for the boy is a three-dimensional, non-solid pattern that subsists according to the trainer's individual motions without which there would be no model in relation to which the boy is impressed.

Thus the Stoics identify a derivative segment of reality that is objective, invisible, intangible, and intelligible yet still subject to a physical analysis. The objective reality of Stoic incorporeals is grounded in the bodies on which they depend, which is precisely why they are proper objects of thought and discourse. To demonstrate that incorporeal subsistence is derivative yet objective reality dependent on body, I will examine each of the canonical incorporeals—place, void, time, and *lekton* (sayable).

I will call this phenomenon of incorporeality *subsistence according to body*. The phrase is slightly misleading insofar as it does not correspond exactly to the Greek, which gives us subsistence (*hupostasis*). But the fact that Stoic incorporeals subsist according to body is well attested and textually sound: time subsists according to the world's motion, place according to the occupying or delimiting bodies, void according to the entire cosmos, and *lekta* according to rational impressions. Since one of my objectives is to give an account of the principled difference between incorporeals and what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, I need a way to refer to these two kinds of subsistence. I will therefore use *subsistence according to body* for the dependence of Stoic incorporeals on their underlying bodies, as described.

First I want to review some competing interpretations of incorporeality, to put my interpretation in context. Many authors take all incorporeals to be products of thought, either in a Kantian spirit or in a subjective sense. For example, Watson tells that because incorporeals are separable only in thought they therefore exist only in the mind;¹¹⁸ void, place and time do not denote anything physical because incorporeals are intentions;¹¹⁹ and later he compares them to Meinong's subsistents.¹²⁰ Never mind that Meinongian subsistents are not mind-dependent; in either case, they are not couched in physicalist terms of any sort. My diagnosis of this sort of view is that being a proper object of thought and discourse, as the thinkability criterion dictates, gets confused with being a product of thought. So it's perfectly true that incorporeals are separable from body only in thought, but not that they are therefore products of thought.¹²¹ Christensen says that all incorporeals are constructs of the mind and therefore non-objective!¹²² Bréhier agrees, saying that while incorporeals are inert results of the world, they are what is affirmed about the world, and

¹¹⁶ D.L. 7.135 (45E)

¹¹⁷ Galen, *Qual. inc.*, 19.464,10-14 (49E). Brad Inwood (1991) discusses the Stoic notion of non-solid extension at length with significantly different results from mine.

¹¹⁸ 1966: 12, 28

¹¹⁹ *op. cit.*, p. 83

¹²⁰ *op. cit.*, p. 95

¹²¹ Those who say the Stoic categories are ideal suffer from a similar confusion

¹²² 1962: 25, 46

therefore mind-dependent and unreal (except, apparently, void which alone of the incorporeals does subsist on the world itself).¹²³

Others agree that incorporeals are effects of bodies, and take them all to be sayables (*lekta*) but in a mind independent way. The incorporeals are rendered as predicates subsisting (supervening) on body as facts and states or affairs that we read off the material world.¹²⁴ This view is central to problems with understand the subsistence of *lekta*, which are often taken to be the core problem for the Stoic theory of incorporeals. This is so either because it's the oddest man out among the incorporeals and cannot be accounted for in physicalist terms; or, more radically, because all the incorporeals are *lekta*, which cannot be accounted for in physicalist terms.

Another way the incorporeals are understood is as abstract conditions of intelligibility. This consideration leads Bréhier to think of place and *lekta* in Kantian terms so that the incorporeals are unreal but still suitably objective.¹²⁵ It leads Brunschwig to think the incorporeals were recognized at different times and for different reasons,¹²⁶ while it leads Boeri to see the incorporeals as no longer secondary to bodies but on equal ontological footing, a necessary condition for existence.¹²⁷ So again we see a broad range of interpretations tangled up. While it is surely right that the incorporeals available for thought and discourse *do* make the world intelligible, it is not necessarily right to say that they are real for that reason. Void makes the conflagration possible, room makes motion possible, and time enables us to measure speed and slowness; but the fact that they do does mean that is why they are real. They make the world intelligible because they are real, not real because intelligible.

III.1 Place, Room and Void

To appreciate the uniqueness of Stoic void some background is necessary. Leucippus and Democritus, in the 5th century BC were the first atomists, followed by Epicurus in the Hellenistic period (4th and 3rd centuries BC). As David Sedley has argued,¹²⁸ these theories did not come about in a vacuum (so to speak), and their evolution is instructive of the conceptual difficulties of ancient Greek physics. The Greek translated as *void* is *to kenon*, which literally means *the empty*. It is natural to take this as a mass term and thereby understand void as empty space. As Sedley argues, however, in responding to Pythagoras, Parmenides and Melissus, the atomists Leucippus and Democritus conceived of void rather as an element, a negative substance that itself occupies space. Indeed, this is the force of positing atoms and the void (better: voids) as the ultimate constituents of the cosmos. Epicurus and Lucretius, on the other hand, did espouse a concept of void as empty space. In response to puzzles raised by Aristotle, Epicurean void is best characterized as three-dimensional extension that persists when atoms move through it. Though void is no longer an ultimate constituent of the cosmos *qua* element, it remains fundamental in that it is not a derivative attribute of body (atoms), i.e., Epicurean void has independent existence.

¹²³ 1928: 8, 12, 16, 21, 22, 62

¹²⁴ Pasquino (1978: 341); M. Frede (1994); Bréhier (1928: 8)

¹²⁵ 1928: 43 ff.

¹²⁶ 2003: 213, 219

¹²⁷ 1991: 9, 13, 16, 22

¹²⁸ 1982

The Stoics embraced neither of these options; though, as I will show, their conception of void has aspects of both. It is on the one hand an entity in its own right, like the Democritean conception of void as element; on the other hand, it is also empty space, like the Epicurean conception. However, unlike either atomist picture, Stoic void does not exist independently of body; if there were no body there would be nothing at all—not even void.¹²⁹ Accordingly, Stoic void is Something rather than nothing, even though it does not exist. But enough of such paradox mongering: let us turn to a positive exposition of Stoic void to give real sense to these phrases.

The first thing to note is that Stoic void is strictly *extra-cosmic*, i.e., it is outside the material universe (including the heavens), and thus distinct from pockets of space within the material world. In fact, the Stoics recognized *place*, *room* and *void* as three distinct incorporeal phenomena subsisting according to underlying body. Therefore, in order to understand void, I will have to say a bit about place and room as well. Following are some central texts attesting to these novel Stoic entities.

- F) (1) Chrysippus declared place (*topos*) to be (a) what is occupied through and through by an existent (*to katechomenon dia holou hupo ontos*), or (b) what can be occupied (*to hoion <te> katechesthai*) by an existent and is occupied through and through either by a particular existent (*hupo tinos*) or by several (*hupo tinon*). (2) And if what can be occupied by an existent is partly occupied by something and partly unoccupied, the whole will be neither place nor void, but something else unnamed; for the void (*to kenon*) is spoken of almost (*paraplesios*) in the manner of empty containers, while place in the manner of full ones; (3) but is room (*chora*) (a) a bigger thing that can be occupied by an existent and like a bigger container for body, or is it (b) what has room for a bigger body? (4) At any rate, void is said to be infinite (*apeiron*). For what is outside the cosmos is such; and place is finite because no body is infinite. And just as the corporeal is finite, so the incorporeal is infinite, for time is infinite and so is the void. For just as nothing is no limit, so neither is there any limit to nothing, as in the case of void. For according to its own subsistence (*kata ten hautou hupostasin*) it is infinite; and, again, this is made finite by being occupied; but if what fills it is taken away, a limit to it cannot be conceived (*ouk estin autou noesai peras*).¹³⁰
- G) (1) The Stoics say void (*kenon*) is what can be occupied by body but is not occupied, or dimension (*diastēma*) empty of body, or dimension unoccupied by body, (2) and place (*topos*) is what is occupied by an existent and made equal to what occupies it (by *existent* they now mean *body*, as is clear from the interchange of names). (3) They say room (*chora*) is a dimension that is partly occupied by a body, and partly unoccupied. (4) Some said that room is (*huparchein*) the place of a larger body, so that room differs from place in this respect: that place does not reflect the size of the body contained (for even when it contains the smallest of bodies, it is no less called place) while room is noteworthy (*axiologon*) in that it does reflect the size of the body in it.¹³¹
- H) They differentiate void (*kenon*), place (*topos*) and room (*chora*); (1) and void is on the one hand lack of body, (2) while place is what is occupied by body, (3) and room is what is partly occupied, just as in the case of a jar of wine.¹³²

¹²⁹ Accordingly, in contemporary terms, one could say that the Stoic void is neither a substantialist nor a relationist conception, though it has aspects of both. It is substantialist in being an entity in its own right, but relationist in its dependence on body.

¹³⁰ Arius Didymus fr. 25 ap. Stobaeus, 1.161,8-26 (49A)

¹³¹ SE, M. 10.3-5 (49B+); see also PH 3.124

¹³² Aëtius, *Plac.* I.20,1 (SVF 2.504)

- I) (1) The extra-cosmic void (*kenon*) is what extends into infinity from all sides (*apo pantos merous*). And of this, (2) what is occupied by body (*katechomenon hupo somatos*) is called place (*topos*), (3) while what is not occupied will be void.¹³³
- J) The Stoics are compelled to admit that extension in three dimensions (*to triché diastaton*) is common to body and void and place, since they leave void in the nature of existing things even if they deny its presence within the world.¹³⁴

I have urged that all Stoic incorporeals get their reality by subsisting according to underlying body—this was the point of calling them *body-less*. Nowhere is incorporeal dependence on body more apparent than in the definition of place as *what is occupied by body* (F1a, G2, H2, I2). For example, the place where my car is parked depends for its subsistence on my car (and the pavement underneath); and we can say that it has positive physical characteristics in that it has the three spatial dimensions given to it by my car. Thanks to that *body-less* subsistence, my parking place is a proper object of thought and discourse—it is an incorporeal impressor like the drill sergeant’s model in relation to which the commanding faculty is impressed. Only the car can be *seen* because only the car has three *solid* dimensions with resistance (only the car is corporeal), but its place is Something objectively real I can think about because it is three-dimensional. This positive physical characteristic also makes the parking place particular, as evidenced by the Not-Someone test: if a parking place subsists according to a car in Athens, it is not in Megara.

Now, place is defined disjunctively as what is or what *can be* occupied by body (F1b). This sounds a little odd. Are we to define such a place by possible objects? Is there a subsistent parking place for my possible dream car? How would one decide which possible object should be the one to define a place? These questions are rhetorical of course, since this would be the wrong way to take the second disjunct. The subsistence of possible place will not be on the bodies that *could* fill it, but on the bodies that actually determine its boundaries. So the parking space for my dream car is not defined by a non-actual car, but by the actual cars that do in fact carve the boundaries of the place. Whereas place defined as what *is* occupied gets its three dimensions from the occupying body—from the inside out one might say—place defined as what *can be* occupied gets its three dimensions from the delimiting bodies—from the outside in.

There is a further wrinkle to the definition, which is that the second disjunct does not say just that it *can be* occupied but that it can be *and is* occupied. One might think this makes the second disjunct reduce to the first, since it *is* occupied; but that is not the case. Rather, defining place as what *can be and is* occupied signals the Stoic commitment to an intra-cosmic plenum.¹³⁵ A parking place both lacks an occupying car and is in fact occupied by air (or whatever elements); passage G4 confirms this reading, since even the smallest of bodies makes something place. So, place according to the second disjunct is defined by its actual delimiting bodies, on the model of a parking place being defined by the surrounding cars, and there is no barrier to saying that this place is also occupied by air. Put this way the incorporeal subsistence of place on body is apparent in both disjuncts, explaining why it is a proper object of thought and discourse that passes the Not-Someone test. Just as an occupied place subsisting from the inside out in Athens cannot be in Megara, likewise place subsisting according to its delimiting bodies from the outside in in Athens also cannot

¹³³ Cleom., *Cael.* I,1,17-19 (SVF 2.538+)

¹³⁴ Galen, *Qual. inc.*, 19.464,10-14 (49E)

¹³⁵ As Galen confirms, *Diff. puls.*, 8.674,13-14 (49D)

be in Megara. Thus we can see already how an immaterial entity can be an objective particular in a staunchly physicalist system, and make sense of the nominalist label beyond the Stoic commitment to bodies as the only things that exist.

So far we have seen two modes of subsistence: place according to bodies that actually fill it, subsisting from the inside out; and place according to the bodies that create its external boundaries or finite endpoints, subsisting from the outside in. Void offers a third mode, from the outside out, one could say. In addition the passages above, I offer the following testimony concerning the nature of Stoic void.

- K) Void is not scattered (*katesparthai*) among bodies but encompasses them, and void is something outside the heavens *per se*, just as the impression (*hê phantasia*) of many people exceedingly holds, considering void to be something infinite (*apeiron*) outside the heavens.¹³⁶
- L) Moreover (*toimun*) it is necessary that there be a certain subsistence to void (*kenon*). The notion (*hê epinoia*) of it [void] is exceedingly simple, being incorporeal (*asomaton*) and intangible (*anaphous*), and neither having shape (*schema*) nor accepting shape (*schematizomenou*), and neither undergoing nor doing anything, but (rather) being simply what is capable of receiving (*dechestha hoion te ontois*) body.¹³⁷
- M) The Stoic void (*kenon*) is not something within, it holds (*huparchein*) outside the cosmos.¹³⁸
- N) Outside [the cosmos] is the infinite void (*apeiron kenon*) encompassing it, which is indeed (*hoper*) incorporeal; and being incorporeal it is what can be occupied by bodies but is not occupied; and in the cosmos there is no void (*kenon*), but it is a united whole (*henosthai*); for the union (*sumpnoian*) and tension (*suntônian*) of the heavenly relative to the terrestrial necessitates this.¹³⁹
- O) The Stoics want there to be a void (*kenon*) outside the world and prove it through the following assumption. Let someone stand at the edge of the fixed sphere and stretch out his hand upwards. If he does stretch it out, they take it that something exists outside the world into which he has stretched it, and if he cannot stretch it out, there will still be something outside which prevents him from doing so. And if he should next stand at the limit of this and stretch out his hand, a similar question will arise. For something that is also outside that point will have been shown to exist.¹⁴⁰

Void is in a way the incorporeal par excellence¹⁴¹ being defined purely in terms of lacking body—it is whatever can be occupied by body but isn't occupied at all (G1, H1, I3, N). One might thereby be tempted to think of it as nothing at all. However, it is very much a determinate phenomenon with positive physical characteristics whose objectivity and particularity are due to its underlying body, the entire material cosmos. The only boundary of void is the outside limit or edge of the corporeal universe, the starting point according to which the external void beyond subsists. It is therefore infinite (F4, I1, K, N) in being unbounded in its outward extension *from all sides* (I1).

¹³⁶ Philoponus 17.614 (SVF 1.96)

¹³⁷ Cleom., *De motu* 8.10-14 (49C)

¹³⁸ Galen, *De animi peccatis dignoscendis* SVF 2.542; see also *Diff. puls.* 8.674,13-14 (49D)

¹³⁹ DL 7.140 (SVF 2.543); see also Cleom., *De motu* 10,24-12,5 (49H)

¹⁴⁰ Simpl., *In Ar. De caelo* 284.28-285,2 (49F)

¹⁴¹ To borrow Brunschwig's phrase (2003: 213)

Though it is defined as what can be occupied and isn't, void is not a modal concept,¹⁴² just as the second disjunct of place as what can be occupied was not defined in terms of my possible dream car. Rather, each is characterized as what can be occupied because of the actual delimiting bodies that make them real—place as what can be and is occupied (from the outside in) and void as what can be occupied and isn't (from the outside out). The infinity of void is thus not nothing at all (or mere indeterminacy) but an entity of infinite spatial extent,¹⁴³ albeit in one direction.¹⁴⁴

And this infinity is no slight to the objective reality of void, as evidenced by the Stoics' realist language in passages F4 and K: "*In respect of its own subsistence* it is infinite," and "void is outside the heavens *per se*." On the other hand, while this realist language is certainly testament to void as an objective phenomenon, it does not give reason to think that void is self-subsistent, independent or prior to the material world, as Keimpe Algra suggests.¹⁴⁵ It is just that the extra-cosmic void subsists in three non-solid dimensions according to the material world from which it inherits those dimensions, as passages I1 and J indicate. Galen (J) sees absurdity in the result, as he does in the distinction between existence and subsistence, but closer inspection shows that the Stoic conception of place and void as three-dimensional is perfectly coherent, even if unusual; likewise, subsistence remains a physicalist notion even though incorporeals are immaterial. Place and void lack body but not extension and are thus physical though not material. The objectivity of the void, as with place, is due to underlying body. Should the material world disappear, the extra-cosmic void would cease to subsist as well. What would be left is nothing at all.¹⁴⁶

So, as with place, the objectivity of void is due to body and measured by its availability for thought, which is illustrated by passages F4, K and L. Our inability to conceive of an outside limit to void (F4) is not a cognitive shortcoming, but due to the fact that the void is infinite, and thus testament to the thinkability criterion as measure of objective reality. If there were an outside limit to void, it (the limit) would be a proper object of thought and discourse; since there isn't one (and

¹⁴² Contra Todd (1982) and Bréhier (1928)

¹⁴³ Thus I am with most commentators, e.g., David E. Hahm, (1977), and Sorabji (1988), and against Inwood's suggestion that void is unfilled extension...best "distinguished as unlimitedness in the simplest sense, absence of limits or boundaries...thus a rather negative conception [that] makes no positive assertion about spatial extent, as the atomistic conception of infinity does." I also disagree with Inwood that incorporeals are indefinite by nature; the *lekton* is a direct counterexample, not divisible to infinity, as Brunschwig observes (1988: 90); and conspicuously absent from Stobaeus' list of things divisible to infinity, which includes bodies and things comparable to bodies like surface, line, place, void and time (1.142,2-6 (50A)). Furthermore, it's not clear how place can be considered unlimited according to Inwood's interpretation. If unlimited extension is limited when occupied, then place is strictly speaking not an unlimited incorporeal except insofar as it is extension. If so, Stobaeus' report that what is incorporeal is infinite is no longer taken to apply to all incorporeals, just time and void.

¹⁴⁴ Just as the series of natural numbers extends infinitely in one direction from a determinate starting point (1 or 0); that the Stoics were open to this way of thinking of infinity is evidenced by their description of time as infinite on precisely this model (Stob. 1.105,8-16 (51D))

¹⁴⁵ 1995: 319

¹⁴⁶ By the same token, there is no genuine problem with the coherence of the cosmos as Peripatetics and others hostile to the Stoics' extra-cosmic void have supposed. The *prima facie* problem is that if the cosmos were not at the center of the extra-cosmic void it would not remain a unified whole. However, this too is a false problem for the Stoics because it's not that the cosmos is at the center of an independently existing (or subsisting) void. Wherever the cosmos exists, that's the center of everything there is because it is the beginning of the infinite extra-cosmic void (the rest of all there is). Cf. Plut., *St. rep.* 44. 1054-B-1055C and Algra, who (to my mind, unnecessarily) takes void in two senses: as isotropic and infinite *qua* empty space as such but anisotropic and finite *qua* room required for the conflagration (op. cit., throughout but especially p. 303, p. 306); see also Victor Goldschmidt, *Le Système stoïcien et l'idée du temps*, Vrin (1969), who takes the position of the cosmos to determine the *center* of the void, as opposed to its start.

can't be *ex hypothesi*) we can't conceive of it. Likewise, the impression that many people have of void as something infinite outside the heavens (K) is testament to the fact that void is an objectively real impressor in relation to which the commanding faculty is impressed. Given its incorporeal, i.e., intangible nature, it would stand to reason that void would be an intelligible rather than sensible impressor—but, as Sextus' drill sergeant passage shows, that is no slight to its objectivity or physicality. Further, the simplicity of the notion of void (L) reflects the simplicity of its objective subsistence from the outside out.

Now, the Stoics were motivated to posit the extra-cosmic void by their belief in the everlasting recurrence of the world through periods of conflagration when the world expands into pure fire, then contracts and starts over. The conflagration requires room for the cosmos to expand; void therefore must be extra-cosmic (and therefore there must be extra-cosmic void). Inwood thinks Chrysippus would not have been impressed with the argument from the edge of the cosmos (O), since void is not a limit and therefore could not delimit the world.¹⁴⁷ However, Stoic void is not intended to act as a limit to the earth and heavens, but quite the contrary. It is the material world that limits the void, not the other way around. And the Stoic thought experiment from the edge of the heavens argues only that, assuming one were in fact at the edge of the material cosmos, then if one could extend a hand there must be Something there and that it must of necessity be incorporeal. If somehow one could not extend a hand it would show that one had not been at the edge of the material cosmos since something *existent* would be there to block it. What I find funny about the argument is the idea that something existent would prevent the hand from extending, given the definition of place as what can be *and is* occupied—clearly being occupied by body is no *per se* barrier to being able to receive body; as a result one might never know whether one were at the edge of the cosmos or not. But this is hardly an empirical argument on offer, and the Stoics are not raising epistemic worries. Rather, it is a thought experiment designed to support their commitment to the extra-cosmic void that makes room for the conflagration: assuming one were at the edge of the material cosmos, the ability to go beyond would be testament to Something non-existent being there to receive body.

So void is technically whatever is outside the corporeal world, and it extends infinitely from all sides of the cosmos. Let's now handle the elephant in the room, so to speak: room (*chora*). Passages F, G and H, which I will recap, raise some important puzzles about place and void. Passage F from Stobaeus reports fragment 25 of Arius Didymus, who attributes to Chrysippus the disjunctive definition of place as what is occupied or what can be occupied (and is) (F1a and F1b). Then we get a further division of the second disjunct into (F2), what is partly occupied and partly unoccupied, so that the whole thing is nameless, since it's neither void (spoken of like empty containers) nor place (spoken of like full ones); this characterization of nameless partly occupied place is followed by the question (F3) whether room is (a) the bigger container or (b) what has room for a bigger body. From there we get (F4) that at any rate void is infinite, as evidenced by the fact that a limit to void is inconceivable.

¹⁴⁷ 1991: 260 ff.; cf. Lucretius 1.958-97 (10B), who argues that when a javelin thrown from the edge of the cosmos does not return, we can infer that the cosmos itself is infinite because there is nothing there to limit it. The key assumption is that "nothing can have an extremity unless there is something beyond it to limit it." The Stoics reject this very assumption, saying instead that a body is limited from the inside out by its internal tension or tenor.

What are we to make of the distinction between the nameless phenomenon of F2 and the room dilemma of F3? It looks as though we have a division of place considered as what can be occupied into two distinct phenomena, what is partly occupied and nameless, on the one hand, and room on the other. What then is the nameless phenomenon and how is it different from room, especially given the explicit definition of room in passages G and H as what is partly occupied? Inwood takes the nameless phenomenon to be extension, and its namelessness as evidence that Chrysippus' view was new and different from other Stoics'. Algra, on the other hand, takes this passage to represent Chrysippus' orthodox Stoic view, as opposed to passage G that introduces Chrysippus' heterodox view of room. I think we need not see Chrysippus as heterodox at any juncture.

First, what is nameless is the whole entity (*to holon*) that is partly occupied and partly unoccupied, and the reason it is nameless is that it doesn't align either with void or place because it is neither full of body nor empty of body. This seems like a reasonable puzzle about the nature of a body-less incorporeal: it has extension from the underlying body, but it's not clear what to call it. There's no real question about the nature of the phenomenon, just about how to classify such an intracosmic pocket. What would be convenient is for this phenomenon to be called room, and for F3 to introduce a further puzzle as to whether room names the bigger thing able to be occupied by body, like a greater container for body, or just the phenomenon of there being room for a bigger body. Thus it would be the distinction between attaching "bigger" to the container versus the body—is there a finite container bigger than the body it actually contains, or is room defined in terms of the larger body that could go there? Does room refer to the container, or the space inside the container that could be occupied?

However, the nameless entity and room do look, grammatically speaking, like two distinct phenomena so that it would be strained to cast F3 as a further division of F2 rather than as a contrast. I propose that this can be explained as the rather fine-grained distinction between three distinct phenomena: the nameless entity of F2 will be the whole entity consisting of the occupied place plus unoccupied room, the pocket inside; room in the sense of F3a will be the limit of the container itself; and room in the sense of F3b will be the unoccupied extension within the container. These are subtle distinctions indeed—pedantic perhaps, but not without sense and not contradictory.¹⁴⁸ In fact, the common thread is their extension in three body-less dimensions and their being objectively available for thought as a result. Contrary to Brad Inwood, then, I take the phenomenon of non-solid extension to be dependent on body, not prior to it nor a later innovation by Chrysippus. So while I agree that extension underwrites the phenomena of place and void, and that Chrysippus is providing the conceptual backdrop to Zeno's incorporeals,¹⁴⁹ I don't take extension to be a *further* incorporeal entity but the mode of incorporeal reality that place, void and room¹⁵⁰ all share. The Stoics from Zeno forward recognized a pervasive phenomenon, not itself material or sensible but nonetheless physical and intelligible. Thus I don't take Chrysippus as unorthodox in his views about place, room or void.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Thus I take this account to answer Algra's desiderata for the passage. Namely, that one account for the difference between room and the nameless phenomenon, as well as the two senses of room (3a and 3b), room as incorporeal.

¹⁴⁹ 1991: 254

¹⁵⁰ As well as surface and the limits of bodies generally; see n. 154 below

¹⁵¹ As Inwood and Algra both suggest

The real lesson of this passage, I urge, is that the Stoics recognized incorporeality as a pervasive phenomenon, inheriting objective reality from the bodies underlying. Indeed, what place, void and room have in common is their three-dimensional extension.¹⁵² That the Stoics recognized three-dimensional spatial incorporeals as of a kind is evidenced by Diogenes Laertius' report that the Stoics divided physics into five topics, the fifth being limits, place and void.¹⁵³ Room is not mentioned on this list, but if I am right that the Stoics worked with an open-ended list of incorporeals its omission could be explained by recognizing the nameless incorporeal as a sort of limit¹⁵⁴ and room as a sort of place. But I don't think it's necessary to take such a determinate stand on the matter. Rather, it would make good sense for there to be internal disagreement as to how best to classify things like room and the nameless phenomenon, and for controversial entities not to show up on canonical reports.

For example, passage G tells us that room is partly occupied, partly unoccupied extension (as does passage H) and that some Stoics said the difference between room and place is that room makes the size of the occupying body relevant. If we take these as less fine-grained reports than what we got in passage F, the texts are perfectly compatible. The description of room as partly occupied, partly unoccupied extension is prior to (less fine-grained than) the distinctions between the nameless entity (occupied plus unoccupied extension together), room as the limit of the container, and room as the unoccupied extension inside the container; so too for the description of room as the place of a larger body. In all cases room amounts to an intracosmic incorporeal phenomenon,¹⁵⁵ pockets of space that can be (and are) occupied. Again, what these passages tell us is that there was some debate as to how to classify unoccupied spaces in the world: should they be called void, while defining place as what is actually occupied; or should they be classified as place that can be occupied, as in the disjunctive report? The debate over how to characterize unoccupied spaces in the world emphasizes that void is strictly speaking unoccupied space outside the world, place is strictly speaking occupied space in the world, and that incorporeality is a pervasive physical phenomenon. Whatever the classification of the intracosmic pockets, their reality is uncontroversially dependent on the bodies that determine their extension and boundaries.

Because of this body-less subsistence, place, void and room are objectively available for thought and discourse, and they are particulars. I already showed that places defined as what can be and are occupied (i.e., place defined from the outside in) are objective particulars that pass the Not-Someone (*outis*) test. The same will apply to any interpretation of room(s) we care to give—insofar as they are intra-cosmic pockets dependent for their objective reality on delimiting bodies and thus akin to place, they will pass the *outis* test. For example, if there is room in a wine jar in Athens, it can't be in Megara; the pockets in Athens are not the ones in Megara. The more interesting question is how extra-cosmic void, being infinite, passes the *outis* test: if void is in Athens, then it is not in

¹⁵² Time and *lekta* will also inherit their objectivity from underlying body, but not in the same, spatial way; time will be the temporal dimension of underlying body, and *lekta* the semantic.

¹⁵³ 7.132 (43B)

¹⁵⁴ The limits of bodies, e.g., the surface of my kitchen counter, are also incorporeal on my account; I argue in Chapter IV that there is a systematic ambiguity to the term *limit* between incorporeal limits that subsist according to underlying body (like the surface of my kitchen counter) and limits that subsist according to thought (*kat' epinoian*), like mathematical points and the hypothetical surfaces of a sliced mathematical cone (Plut., *Comm. not.*, 1078E-1081A (50C)). On the status of limits see Anna Ju (2009)

¹⁵⁵ Thus I disagree with Algra that room should be considered the finite amount of extra-cosmic void required for the conflagration.

Megara. As stated, the result is unclear. If treated as a mass term, it would be false to say that if there is some void in Athens then there is no void in Megara; just as it would be false to say that if there is some honey in Athens, there is none in Megara. On this interpretation, Brunschwig says the *outis* test is powerless to justify the extra-cosmic void as Something.¹⁵⁶ His solution is to say that void, properly speaking, refers to the unified and continuous extra-cosmic void, which does pass the *outis* test. If (*per impossibile*) the extra-cosmic void is in Athens, then it can't be in Megara. So far Brunschwig is exactly right—namely, that Stoic void is the extra-cosmic void as described above, and that *qua* particular it cannot be in two places at once. But the unfortunate assumption that void acts as a mass term sends Brunschwig in circles to address the intra-cosmic pockets.

[T]he term “void,” while remaining a mass term, applicable in the same sense to the whole and its parts, designates nothing more, when it applies to the whole, than a continuous whole of a single tenor, with the exception of the enclave of the world that limits it on the interior as a hole limits the continuity of a Gruyère; and when the term *void* applies to the parts of the whole, it designates nothing more than parts arbitrarily lifted from the continuous whole.¹⁵⁷

Brunschwig's result is that the extra-cosmic void has cosmic parts, the contradictoriness of which he hedges by making the parts somehow arbitrary. Now, there is an important sense in which the Stoics do make parts of the whole arbitrary and of a lesser reality,¹⁵⁸ but in making the void correspond to the Gruyère, and the world to the holes, Brunschwig reduces the Stoics to absurdity because the void is no longer extra-cosmic. Treating the parts as arbitrary is therefore too little too late, and runs afoul of the principle that mass terms are applicable *in the same sense* to whole and parts. The problem is Brunschwig's assumption that void is a mass term, which blinds him to the fact that the so-called intra-cosmic void and extra-cosmic void are just two different phenomena, i.e., two different kinds of incorporeal reality. Void, strictly speaking is extra-cosmic: it begins at the edge of the material world and extends indefinitely (infinitely) out from there in all directions. As a single, continuous entity determined by a body (i.e., the world) it is itself a particular that passes the *outis* test. The void outside *this* world can't be over there, outside *that* world (not that the Stoics recognized more than one cosmos, though they could entertain it as logically possible).¹⁵⁹

The Stoics also recognized pockets of space in the material world, able to receive body; that there was internal debate as to whether these should be classified as a kind of place, void, room, or something else is testament to the fact that the Stoics recognized the pockets as a further kind of incorporeal. There is on the one hand place as defined by the body that occupies it, from the inside out; on the other hand void as defined by the edge or limit of the material world, from the outside out; and then there is another phenomenon where bodies define a space from the outside in—should we call that the extension itself, the limit of the extension or the combination of both? What we have are several different ways in which extension can be conceived without body. It is only natural that there be an active debate as to how to characterize the various kinds of incorporeal

¹⁵⁶ 1988: 97

¹⁵⁷ *op. cit.*, pp. 98-9

¹⁵⁸ As continuum physicists, the Stoics held that although the corporeal and incorporeal world (including time) can be divided to infinity, it does not consist of infinitely many bodies or incorporeal parts. See Stob. 1.105,17-106,4 (51E), 1.106,5-23 (51B), 1.142,2-6 (50A); DL 7.150-1 (50B); Plut., *Comm. not.*, 1078E-1080E (50C), 1081C-1082A (51C). See also Nolan (2006)

¹⁵⁹ That the Stoics were live to this kind of distinction between metaphysical and logical possibility is evidenced by Chrysippus' consideration (cited polemically by Plut., *St. rep.* 44, 1054B-1055C) of the logical possibility of a cosmos not in the center of an independent void, as Algra notes (1995: 301 ff.).

subsistents. Being in the world, these pockets are akin to place and so warrant the disjunctive definition of place attested by Stobaeus. On the other hand, being what *can* receive body makes the pockets akin to void—but not proper parts or the same thing as void. Brunschwig's error is in the way he deploys the Gruyère metaphor. He makes the cheese correspond to void, and body to the holes (such an egregious role reversal might have been a clue that something was amiss). But it's the perfectly intuitive sense of Swiss cheese that captures the phenomena: the cheese corresponds to the material world, the holes to the pockets of space in the material world, and everything outside the cheese to the extra-cosmic void. Extra-cosmic void is thus an objective particular subsisting according to the material world, from which it inherits its particularity and objective reality. As such, it passes the *outis* test straightforwardly, without the need for *ad hoc* restrictions (as Caston had worried).

We are now in a position to see just how the Stoics agree and disagree with the atomists about void. They agree with Leucippus and Democritus, who conceived of void (or rather, voids) as fundamental elements of the cosmos, in that Stoic void is an objective particular we refer to with a count noun; hence the point of countenancing void as Something. They also agree with Epicurus and Lucretius, who take void in the sense of empty space, in that Stoic void is empty three-dimensional extension capable of receiving body; it is the same in its whole and parts the way a mass term is. Contrary to both atomist theories, however, Stoic void is no fundamental building block of the universe but entirely dependent on body as *sine qua non*. If all body were eliminated, there would be no void; there would be nothing at all. Further, insofar as the Stoics recognize void as an extra-cosmic phenomenon, they have in a sense changed the topic; as far as intra-cosmic space goes, the Stoics work in terms of place and room. But in the cases of place and room the same points of comparison hold. Both are referred to by count nouns rather than mass terms, and both are homogenous three-dimensional space capable of receiving body. They are not, however, empty *per se* since the Stoics are committed to an intracosmic plenum; further, they are not fundamental building blocks of the cosmos since they depend entirely on body without which these novel entities would not subsist at all. For the atomists, void is a *sine qua non* (as are atoms, of course). But for the Stoics, the only *sine qua non* is body; indeed, on this score their nominalist strain is quite strong.

Nonetheless, Stoic void is essential to explaining the cosmos as they see it; it is not just some superfluous entity they recognize because it follows from the principle of body-less subsistence. For the Stoics there is no beginning or end to the world's motion, just an everlasting recurrence punctuated by periods of conflagration when the world turns into fire and then starts over. During the conflagration the world becomes pure undifferentiated fire, expanding as God withdraws into himself (itself) and prepares to exhale another cosmos just like the last one. In order for the cosmos to expand, there must be Something into which it expands; thus Stoic void plays a practical cosmological role for the Stoics, as it does for the atomists.

The theoretical simplicity of Stoic void and body-less subsistence generally that I have presented harken to another aspect of nominalist thought: Ockham's razor. On this score my reading of void and incorporeality is preferable to others. For example, Inwood takes extension to be a separate phenomenon from void, place and room (albeit one that gives their conceptual backdrop) as well as a later innovation by Chrysippus; but the textual evidence supports my account of void, place and room as cases of non-solid extension dependent on body without taking

Chrysippus to be heterodox or populating the ontology beyond attested entities.¹⁶⁰ Inwood also takes incorporeals to be indeterminate *per se*, despite the fact that place (for one) is clearly not unbounded or indeterminate (*apeiron*); instead of swimming upstream of the incorporeals that are clearly not indeterminate, my reading takes the indeterminacy of void as a case of spatial infinity, which accords perfectly well with the strong textual evidence that place, void and room are non-solid extension inherited from underlying body. Likewise, my reading does not render void as limit of the material cosmos, which battles texts that clearly characterize void as three-dimensional extension from the outside out.

Another case of unnecessary complications in handling textual evidence is Algra's reading of void in two senses: as empty space *per se*, on the one hand, and as room required for the conflagration, on the other. If room, place and void are just three distinct body-less phenomena according to one and the same principle of incorporeal subsistence as I have urged, then Algra's hard fought fix is for naught. Finally, even Long and Sedley complicate matters by glossing *subsistence* as akin to Meinong's *bestehen*, thereby abdicating the Stoics' physicalist commitments. My contention that incorporeals always subsist according to underlying body is to be preferred for the theoretical elegance it confers on the Stoic ontology. The simplicity of the principle of body-less subsistence is clearest in the case of place, room and void: they are all cases of three-dimensional extension inherited from their occupying or delimiting bodies.

If I am right that the Stoics recognized incorporeal subsistence as a pervasive immaterial yet physical phenomenon, the ontology as a whole is well on its way to being principled and coherent. The incorporeals are not just a collection of left-over entities that don't fit the corporeal mold but aren't quite dispensable either, subsistence is not mere *ad hoc* jargon, and Something is not a gerrymandered genus of reality. Rather, subsistence marks a derivative mode of reality dependent on body as *sine qua non*. The central Stoic innovation is that they countenanced immaterial reality within a physicalist framework of a sophisticated nominalist spirit. On this view, even void—the infinite nothing beyond—can coherently be called Something.

III.2 Time

The next challenge is to see how the Stoics account for time in this spirit. The subsistence of time will not be three-dimensional like place, void and room but it is described with the same vocabulary, namely as extension (*diastêma*) due to underlying body (the material cosmos as a whole, as with void).¹⁶¹ The central questions are: how does it depend on body as *sine qua non*, and what could it possibly mean for time to be an objective particular? As with accounts of place and void, time is considered variously ideal, subjective and unreal. I will argue it is none of the above, but rather the *objectively subsisting temporal extension of change in the material world*. I proceed now to our textual evidence, and will introduce the interpretive difficulties as they arise.

¹⁶⁰ Inwood's strongest textual evidence for extension as an additional entity is the nameless phenomenon of F2; it's namelessness, he argues, is testament to Chrysippus' invention of extension as a new incorporeal.

¹⁶¹ *Interval* or *dimension* are less awkward translations of *diastêma* in application to time; but for the sake of emphasizing the sameness of terminology with place, void and room I will continue to use *extension*.

- (P) Aristotle said time (*chronos*) is the number (*arithmon*) of motion (*kinésis*). Of the Stoics, Zeno said time is simply the extension (*diastéma*) of all motion, but Chrysippus said it is the dimension of the world's (*kosmon*) motion.¹⁶²

The first thing to notice about the Stoic conception of time is that it is defined in terms of the world's motion (*kinésis*), which for the Stoics is always understood as material or corporeal change. Some scholars have made hay over the difference between Zeno's and Chrysippus' definitions, indeed finding the Stoics to differ significantly from one another on time so that the school is scarcely coherent. Bréhier finds that by adding that it is the world's motion, Chrysippus emphasizes the unreality of time.¹⁶³ Dorothea Frede suggests: "It may well be that the 'widening' of Stoic ontology to cover not just the physically, corporeally present was the most important change that Chrysippus made to Zeno's philosophy."¹⁶⁴ I take the distinction between Zeno's and Chrysippus' definitions to be a red herring symptomatic of a failure to appreciate the guiding principles of Stoic ontology when untangling the puzzles that come with their account of time as an incorporeal. If the ontology doesn't make much sense to begin with, commentators might think, then finding large doctrinal differences within the school is nothing to wonder at. But Zeno could scarcely have had in mind some motion other than the world's motion. Thus, Zeno's definition of time as the extension of all motion, and Chrysippus' in terms of the *world's* motion amount to the same. All motion is corporeal for the Stoics, and the world just is everything corporeal; so specifying that time is the dimension of the *world's* motion adds nothing.

The most pressing question is what it means for time to be the *incorporeal dimension* (*diastéma*) of material change. The Stoic definition of time is remarkably similar to Aristotle's, differing only in that the Stoics use the term *extension* where Aristotle says time is the *number* (*arithmon*) of motion. Now, for Aristotle time is unreal; and the definition of time as *number* of motion captures this fact by making time dependent on the counter, i.e., ideal. But if the Stoic view of time is like Aristotle's in this way, there are immediate problems for Stoic physicalism. It looks incoherent for them to hold that time is unreal while making it officially real, i.e., recognizing it as Something incorporeal. And the problem is contagious to the ontology as a whole. If incorporeals are ideal entities, in admitting time and the other incorporeals into their ontology the Stoics look like more akratic materialists who can't resist the occasional Form than like creative physicalists. And one doesn't want to see time come out as an entity independent of body either, since that would make the Stoics more like closet Platonists (just as independent void would make the Stoics too much like the atomists and put them in conflict with their commitment to bodies as the only independently existing entiteis).

So, again, the central question is what it means for time to be the *incorporeal dimension* of motion, and whether it commits the Stoics to Aristotle's irrealism about time or a Platonist realism, both of which put them in conflict with their hallmark ontological commitments. How can time be real yet dependent on body, as the incorporeals are said to be?

¹⁶² Simpl., *In Ar. Cat.* 350,14-16 (51A)

¹⁶³ 1928: 54-55

¹⁶⁴ 1990: n. 53, 222; see also Goldschmidt (1969) and Rist (1969)

Q) Apollodorus in his work *The Physics* defines time as follows. Time is the extension (*diastéma*) of the world's motion; so (*boutós*) it is infinite (*apeiron*) as the whole of number (*ho pas arithmos*) is said to be infinite. For some of it is past (*pareléuthos*), some present (*enestékos*), and some future (*mellón*). The whole of time (*ton panta chronon*) is present (*enestatai*) as we say a year is present according to a greater outline (*perigraphén*); and the whole of time (*ho pas chronos*) is said to obtain (*huparchein*), though none of its parts obtains exactly (*apartizontós*).¹⁶⁵

In this passage Stobaeus, a neutral Greek anthologist, confirms the Stoic definition of time as the dimension of the world's motion; thus we have this definition ascribed to Zeno, Chrysippus and now a late Stoic of the second century AD. More interestingly, he infers from the definition, that time is therefore (*boutós*) infinite like the whole of number is infinite. Commentators have overlooked this inference, rendering the world's motion and its infinity as a conjunction rather than as causally (explanatorily) related. Long & Sedley and Schofield both render the *boutós* clause as follows: "and it is infinite in just the way that the whole of number is said to be infinite," with *boutós* as emphasis in "in just the way." But there is an independent *hós* to do the work of comparing time to number, so it is unnecessary to take the *boutós* as emphasizing the comparison rather than doing its own work of drawing a conclusion from the preceding definition of time.¹⁶⁶ So here one wants to know exactly why a definition of time in terms of corporeal motion commits the Stoics to the further result that time is infinite like the whole of number. We are given a gloss on the similarity between the infinity of number and time, namely that some of it is past, some present and some future. I understand this to mean that relative to any given number in the infinite sequence, call this the "present" number, all others will be before (past) or after (future). The relevant similarity between time and the whole of number, I suggest, is that both are infinite in having infinitely many parts, which are sequential (in order) and linear (as opposed to circular) in their arrangement. Schofield, by contrast, finds that the relevant similarity is that only the whole of number is infinite, as opposed to its parts, which are not.¹⁶⁷ While it is true that time and number are analogous in this way, I think we can get more out of the analogy than that. One should not take such comparisons lightly, and I will continue to dwell on how the analogy is confirmed and increasingly informative about the nature of time in Stoic philosophy.

The next datum in passage Q introduces two important technical terms in the debate over Stoic time: being present (*enestatai*), and obtaining (*huparchein*). We are told that the whole of time is present (*enestatai*) like a whole year is present, i.e., according to a greater compass or outline (*perigraphé*); and that the whole of time obtains (*huparchein*), or is the case, as opposed to its parts, which do not obtain exactly. We don't get much detail here by which to understand these important terms (being present and obtaining), but it is clear at least that the Stoics are making a distinction between whole and parts; and that they are giving the whole a certain pride of place over parts in saying that only the whole, which is infinite on the model of number, is present and obtains.

R) (1) Posidonius. Some things are infinite (*apeira*) in every respect (*kata pan*), like the whole of time (*sumpas chronos*), while others [are infinite] in a certain respect (*kata í*), like past (*paraléluthós*) and future (*ho mellón*) time; for each has been limited only according to the present (*ton paronta*). (2) Time is defined as follows: extension (*diastéma*) of motion or measure (*metron*) of speed and slowness. (3) And he holds that that time which is thought of

¹⁶⁵ Stob. 1.105,8-16 (51D)

¹⁶⁶ LS (1987: 305), Schofield (1988: 365)

¹⁶⁷ 1988: 366

in terms of *when* (*to pote*) is partly past, partly future and partly present; the present being that which is composed (*sunestêke*) of a part of past and a part of future around the division (*diorismon*) itself [between past and future]. But the division is point-like. (4) *Now* and the like are conceived of broadly (*en platei*) and not exactly (*kat' apartismon*). (5) *Now* (*to nun*) is also spoken of according to the smallest perceptible time composed of future and past around the division [between past and future].¹⁶⁸

Passage R begins by making explicit two senses of infinity in play for the Stoics: that of the whole, which is infinite in every respect, and that of the parts, which are infinite only in a certain respect. The past and future are infinite in this second way, being limited by the present and extending infinitely in opposite directions. This accords naturally with the analogy between time and number.¹⁶⁹ The idea that the whole of time is infinite in every respect will remain elusive for the time being but we can say at least that it is infinite in having no limit in either direction. But now we need to know about the present, and in particular how it can serve as a limit to past and future. R3 tells that the when the present is thought as a space of time, i.e., in terms of *when*, it is past, present and future. The present in turn, also a span of time, is composed of a part of the past and a part of the future *around* the point-like division between them; one might thereby think of the present as an imprecise *while* around a precise dividing point between past and future. This might sound too metaphorical to be informative, but as we will see it's a creative way of reconciling the intuition that time is instantaneous (like the division between past and future) with the intuition that time is extended (as in, it is *now* day, night, March, Spring, or 2012). Passage R4 tells us that *now* and the like (i.e., *when* and the *present*) are spoken of broadly (*en platei*) and not exactly, which speaks to the idea that time is extended, and comes in spans. Note the physical language used to describe the imprecise sense of time: *en platei* is the way surface and flatness are described, and it is surely no coincidence that time is spoken of that way. Even R5, though it talks of now as the least perceptible time, is an extended notion of time since it is *around* the point-like division between past and future.

The analogy with number is helpful in getting a first grip on the infinity of time, but it may raise more questions than it answers. Are there really points in time like the whole numbers? It's not clear how far we should press the analogy with number. How can the present can be both point-like and extended? Further, R2 introduces an alternate definition of time as the *measure of speed and slowness*, which one could easily take along Aristotelian lines as evidence that time requires a counter and is therefore unreal. So, while we have gathered a good amount of information—that the whole of time is infinite, present and obtains, in contrast to its parts that are spoken of and obtain only inexactly—it is not yet clear what it means to be the extension of the world's motion (especially glossed as a measure of speed and slowness), why it follows from that definition that time is infinite, or what it means for the whole of time to be present and obtain. Pressing on:

- S) (1) Chrysippus said time is the extension (*diastêma*) of motion, according to which the measure (*metron*) of speed and slowness is spoken of; or the dimension accompanying (*parakolouthoun*) the world's motion. (2) And that all things (*hekasta*) move and exist according to time; and if not, then time is spoken of in two ways, just as earth and sea and void (*kenon*) are: as wholes and as their parts. And just as the whole of void (*to kenon pan*) in its totality is infinite (*apeiron*) in every respect (*pantei*), so time in its totality (*panta*) is infinite on either side (*ep' hekatera*); for the past and future are infinite. (3) He says most clearly that no time is wholly present (*outeis bolos enistatai chronos*). For since what is continuous (*ton sunechonton*) is divisible to infinity, according to this division (*diairesis*), all (*pas*) time will be

¹⁶⁸ Stob. 1.105,17-106,4, Posidonius fr. 98 (51E)

¹⁶⁹ Thus, I disagree with Schofield that the analogy with number is “hard to fathom” (1988: 366)

divisible to infinity as well, so that (*hōste*) no single time (*mēthena*) is present (*enestanaî*) exactly (*kat' apartismon*), but is spoken of broadly (*kata platos*). (4) He also says that only the present (*ton enestōta*) obtains (*huparchein*), and that the past and future subsist (*huphestanaî*) but in no way (*oudamos*) obtain, just as only predicates (*katēgorēmata*) are said to obtain (*huparchein*) only when the [actual] attributes (*sumbebēkota*) do, for example *walking* obtains of me when I am walking, and does not obtain when I am lying down or sitting.¹⁷⁰

S1 helps elucidate the extension of the motion, by specifying that it *accompanies* or *follows upon* (*parakolouthoun*) the world's motion. This phrase, *following upon*, surely indicates an important relation between material change and time. Unfortunately, there is scholarly dissent as to the nature of this relation. For example, Ricardo Salles takes Jonathan Barnes to task for making time a direct function of change, and for taking incorporeals to be individuated by bodies.¹⁷¹ According to Salles, the Stoics do not require change for time and, more generally, do not individuate incorporeals by body. This is as foundational a disagreement as they come, and provides a good example of how tightly the Stoics' ontological principles hang with particular theories like their account of time. For instance, taking S2 on Salles' view, all things are in time because time is independent of and prior to change; if so, then the Stoics are already in conflict with their maxim that only bodies exist independently.

It is also unclear what to make of the inference that if some things are not in time, then it's because time is spoken of in two ways: one way that all things are in time and one way that they're not. The analogy with earth, sea and void indicates that a certain mass term conception is in play, but this does not obviously help with the question, do all things exist according to a part of time or the whole of time? Are all ships in a part of the sea, or the whole of it? I don't know. We get a little more information from the last part of S2, which compares the infinity of void in every respect with that of time in either direction. Now, the infinity of void in every respect was cashed out as the three-dimensional extension of void from all sides of the cosmos. Perhaps the thing to say is that change, i.e., the world's motion is sequential, so being infinite on either side makes it rather a two-dimensional or, better, linear sort of extension. But so far we do not have enough to go on.

Does S3 help? It tells that no particular time is wholly present because what is continuous is divisible to infinity with the result that no particular time (i.e., no part of time) is present exactly, but is spoken of broadly, as extended. One wonders why particular times can only be spoken of broadly. Well, in passage Q we saw that only the whole of time is present like we say a year is present according to a larger outline, because the parts of time do not obtain exactly. It's not yet clear what this means, but it's clear that particular times are considered parts of time, and that they are imprecise and inexact. And, crucially, only the present obtains, but the present is in a way a part of time and in another way the whole of time. How are we to reconcile these commitments? The notion of being present according to a larger outline remains elusive, and it is not obviously intuitive that the present should be equated with the whole of time rather than with *now*. After all, what's the point of talking about the present if it just picks out all of time? Further, the notion of being spoken of broadly might seem to accord better with the larger outline, like a year (or the whole of time), than with discrete parts of time that one might take to be more point-like, or at least less extended.

¹⁷⁰ Stob. 1.16,5-23 (51B)

¹⁷¹ 2005

Matters are further complicated when we turn to S4, which tells us that only the present *obtains* (*huparchein*), while the past and future *subsist* (*huphestanai*) but in no way obtain, where this is elucidated by an obscure analogy with predicates (a kind of sayable, or *lekton*) that are the case when the world fits the description. Here too scholars disagree significantly about what it means to obtain and to subsist, and solutions to ancient puzzles put forth by commentators have failed to find a solution that makes sense of the Stoic ontology. For instance, some maintain that *huparxis* is best translated as *existence*, so that only the whole of time and the present exists while the rest of time is somehow unreal. But in Stoic philosophy the term *huparxis* is applied only in very limited contexts, namely in application to time *qua* whole and present (as we have seen), and in application to true *lekta* (as we will see). Since the Stoics' central ontological innovation is the distinction between existence, which they capture with the verb to be (*einai, on*), and subsistence, which they capture with the verb *huphistasthai* (and *huphestanai*), it would be unusual for them to introduce yet a third term by which they really mean existence—particularly when they apply that term in such limited and clearly technical contexts.

But scholars have not been dissuaded. They have crafted creative solutions that, for example, make the present that obtains (*huparchein*) equivalent to existing things so that it's not time that obtains but bodies; on this model time is an incorporeal that subsists when it's past or future but it's a body that exists when it's present.¹⁷² So somehow time is an incorporeal with corporeal parts, and as time passes it undergoes a sort of change in ontological status from subsistence (*hupostasis*) to existence (*huparxis*) and then back into subsistence. This notion that particular times are ontologically privileged over the whole of time is echoed by David Sedley's suggestion: "it is individual portions of time that will count as actual incorporeals. Time itself, as a species of incorporeal, will be a universal concept" and therefore in "metaphysical limbo" as a Not-Something.¹⁷³ Many scholars have taken the Stoics to divide Something into bodies and incorporeals while also recognizing a category of entities that are not Something but not nothing at all either, which they call not-Somethings (*outina*). For instance, Goldschmidt agrees that the parts of time are finite, corporeal and exist (*huparchei*), in contrast to being incorporeal which is to be an indeterminate concept, i.e., a not-Something in metaphysical limbo. Even the category of Something, according to Goldschmidt, is an indeterminate concept. The intricacy of untangling Stoic scholarship is evident again. First, if the Stoics posit Something as the highest category of being, comprehensive of everything there is, then an additional category of not-Somethings between Something and nothing at all does indeed render their ontology incoherent; yet it is orthodoxy that they did. And, second, it is genuinely perplexing what sort of entity could make the sort of ontological changes, from subsistent to existent and back to subsistent, that some scholars attribute to the Stoics by reading *huparchein* as they do.

So, again, our understanding of time is bound up with the coherence of the ontology as a whole. If you get the ontology wrong, time itself comes out incoherent (as an incorporeal that somehow has corporeal parts); and if you get time wrong, i.e., take it to be unreal or to undergo bizarre changes in ontological status, then the ontology as whole comes out incoherent (as countenancing unreal entities in their accounting of reality). If the Stoics did think this way, their neoplatonist critics are right to mock the incoherence of their thinking. For example:

¹⁷² Papazian (1999)

¹⁷³ 1985: n. 5

- T) Let them [the Stoics] not be angry at being brought to these things by the Little-by-Little Argument, but remember Chrysippus' proceeding to seek as follows in his *Questions on Physics* book 1: It is not the case that *night* is a body, and that *evening, dawn* and *midnight* are not bodies; neither surely (*mên*) can *day* be a body and not also the first day of the month, and the tenth, fifteenth and thirtieth as well as the summer, autumn and the year be bodies.¹⁷⁴

Plutarch rightly levies a Sorites paradox (Little by Little argument) against an account that says time is and is not a body. Indeed, one wants to know at what precise juncture time becomes something present and existent as opposed to past (or future) and subsistent. Such a change in ontological status is perfectly subject to a Sorites paradox, which presses for a precise dividing point between past, present and future (subsistent-existent-subsistent). Furthermore, if the present exists, while the past and future subsist (even if we could stave off the Sorites paradox) it is contradictory to say that an entity with higher ontological status is composed of parts with a lesser status, or that it has any reality of its own at all, as Plutarch also worries:

- U) (1) It is contrary to [common] conception for future (*mellonta*) and past (*parôchêmenon*) time to exist (*einaî*) while the present (*enestôta*) time does not, but for recently and the other day to subsist (*huphestanaî*) while now (*to nun*) is nothing at all (*holôs mêden*). (2) And indeed this follows for the Stoics who do not admit (*apoleipousi*) a smallest time or wish the now to be partless (*amerei*), but claim that whatever present someone supposes himself to have grasped in thought is part future and part past. (3) Consequently no part of present time (*chronon parontos*) according to *now* remains or is left, if that part of this which is said to remain is divided (*dianemetaî*) into parts that are future and those that are past... (1081D-E) (4) All other men posit and consider and suppose both *recently* and *soon* to be different parts from *now*, and *soon* to be after *now* while *recently* is before. But among the Stoics, Archedemus on the one hand says *now* is a certain joining (*harmên*) and meeting (*sumbolên*) of past and future, forgetting, as it seems, that he has destroyed (*anairon*) the whole of time. For if the *now* is not time but a limit (*peras*) of time and every part of time such as the *now* is, all of time appears to have no part but is completely dissolved into limits and meetings and joinings. (5) And Chrysippus, wishing to be skillful in the division, says in his work on the void and in certain other works that the part of time that is past and the part that is future do not obtain (*huparchein*) but subsist (*huphestêkenai*), and only the present (*to enestêkos*) obtains; on the other hand, in the third, fourth and fifth books of *On Parts* he posits that one part of present time is future and the other is past. (6) Consequently it follows for him that the part of time that obtains (*to huparchon*) divides into those parts that do not obtain and those that do, or rather that he leaves entirely none of time as obtaining, if the present has no part that is not future or past.¹⁷⁵

The challenge on the table is that the present can't be real at all because it is composed of non-existent parts. This is hard to reconcile with statements that the present or now is privileged in *obtaining*, and absurd in making the past and future (like recently and the other day) more real than *now* (because at least they are subsistent incorporeals)—in addition to inviting a Sorites paradox in positing ever-shifting parts. If time is composed of unreal parts, it does indeed seem that the Stoics thereby destroy the whole of time. Finally, there is even textual evidence that the Stoics made time mind-dependent.

¹⁷⁴ Plut., *Comm. not.* 1084C-D (51G)

¹⁷⁵ Plut., *Comm. not.* 1081C-1082A (51C)

- V) (1) From what has been said one should also realize that Plato had a quite different view of time from the Stoics or many of the Peripatetics. (2) The Stoics make it a mere thought (*kat' epinoian psilên*), weak (*amenênon*) and very close to non-existing (for according to them time is one of the incorporeals, which indeed they disdain as inactive (*adranê*), not existing, and subsisting in mere thoughts (*en epinoias buphistamenas psilais*). (3) The Peripatetics say it is an accident of motion (*sumbebêkos tês kinêseôs*).¹⁷⁶

This passage is heavy fodder for those who take the incorporeals generally to be products of thought rather than objective physical phenomena, which shows how deep and foundational the debates over Stoic ontology run; and, again, how an incorrect picture of the ontology makes tighter knots in our understanding of the special puzzles concerning time. I will now proceed to show how time can be considered a body-less incorporeal akin to place, void and room, and an objective particular according to the guiding principles I have introduced.

First, I will address the incorporeality of time. The central question is what it means to say that time is the extension (*diastêma*) of the world's motion. Being body-less, I have said, is a matter of depending on body in such a way that the incorporeal inherits certain positive physical characteristics from underlying body. In virtue of these physical yet immaterial characteristics, the incorporeals are objectively available for thought and discourse. In this case, time is the extension, or rate, of corporeal change, which is objectively there for us to grasp with the mind; it's certainly true that the hare runs faster than the tortoise, a fact that is independent of our measuring it and no less objective for being an object of thought rather than the senses. The dependence of time on body is highlighted in passage S by the Greek term *parakolouthoun*; according to Tzamalikos it "means 'that which subsequently accompanies,' and it implies a notion of 'coming behind or after.' In this sense time is regarded as 'standing beside' the 'world,' yet 'following' it."¹⁷⁷ He goes on to complain that the Stoics have no story about the relation between space and time,¹⁷⁸ but if we understand space and time both as subsisting according to the corporeal world, we need not worry about any sort of interaction between space and time. Because there is body, there is space; because bodies move, there is time; therefore bodies, place, void, and room are all in time without making time an independent receptacle.

Thus it matters a lot that the Stoics have used *diastêma* instead of Aristotle's definition in terms of number: they have described time in physical rather than ideal terms, which signals their rejection of time as unreal. *Diastêma* captures what time has in common with void, place and room, namely that their positive physical characteristics are directly dependent on underlying body. This is confirmed by Platonist commentators who prefer a conception of time as independent receptacle of motion, rather than dependent extension. Plutarch and Plotinus complain that time is a mere result of motion, and that saying time accompanies motion is not yet to say what it is.¹⁷⁹ One can agree with the sentiment that it is unclear what those positive physical characteristics are; what exactly is the temporal extension of time, one wants to know? But it's not clear we can hold it against the Stoics that they don't provide a satisfying answer. To say that time depends on the world's motion is already to identify the reality of time with the rate of corporeal change. If one then wants to know what we mean by rate of change, we can speak of the objective speed and slowness of the bodies' motion, as the Stoics do. Once time is defined in terms of material change, it is hard to see what

¹⁷⁶ Proc., *In Plat. Tim.* 271 D (51F)

¹⁷⁷ 1991: 547

¹⁷⁸ op. cit.: 548-9

¹⁷⁹ As Tzamalikos notes (1991: 538-9), citing SVF 2.165,20-22 for Plut. and Plot., *Enn.*3.7.8 and 3.7.10

else there is to say. So, I take *diastēma* to indicate precisely the dependence on body characteristic of Stoic incorporeals. Just as place, room and void are defined as extension in three-dimensions inherited from occupying or delimiting body, so time is defined as the temporal extension inherited from underlying corporeal change. It is the rate of change objectively available for thought, an intelligible object distinct from the corporeal motions themselves, which we apprehend by the senses.

Two important things follow from the dependence of time on corporeal change. One is that we can see why Stobaeus reports (passage Q) that it follows from the Stoic definition of time that it is infinite like the whole of number. For the Stoics there is no beginning or end to the world's motion, just an everlasting recurrence punctuated by periods of conflagration when the world turns into fire and then starts over. If time subsists according to change, and change is eternal, then time will be infinite as well. There are debates in the literature as to whether we should think of time itself as linear, with an infinite iteration of worlds before and after one another; or rather as circular so that time repeats itself (its self-same self) with each new cosmos, and no particular event is strictly before or after another since all are both before and after all others. Alternatively, some say that time ceases during the conflagration, so that past and future apply only within cosmic cycles, and the whole of time refers to the time of that one cycle.¹⁸⁰ I cannot adjudicate this complicated issue in full as it would require a full treatment of recurrence, conflagration and identity conditions,¹⁸¹ but I think there are good reasons to take the Stoic conception of time as linear rather than circular.¹⁸² One is that the infinity of time has been explicitly likened to the infinity of number, which is clearly not circular. Another is that during the conflagration there is still fire and god, not nothing at all, so there is good reason to think that time continues subsisting according to its (admittedly different) underlying body; on a circular conception time must cease between cycles, and can no longer be infinite. This is the problem Schofield encounters with his view that the whole of time is a single world cycle,¹⁸³ unnecessarily to my mind. There is a natural answer as to why, *because* time subsists according to the world's motion it is *therefore* infinite.

The second important thing that follows from time's subsistence on corporeal change is that time is continuous. We have seen that time is infinite in its extension in either direction; this is like the infinite extension of void from all sides of the cosmos. Now we will see another respect in which time is infinite, namely in being infinitely divisible, which gives added depth to the analogy with number in passage Q. This will be crucial in unraveling the knots we have seen concerning the whole of time in contrast to its parts, the nature of the present, and what it means to obtain (*huparchein*) in contrast to subsisting (*huphestanai*). It is well known that the Stoics were continuum physicists, in polar opposition to their Epicurean peers who, as we have seen, were atomists. It is a corollary of the Stoics' monistic physics that the world is infinitely divisible without having infinitely many ultimate parts. Hence, Stobaeus reports:

¹⁸⁰ Schofield (1988), Denyer (1988: 389)

¹⁸¹ See Barnes (1978), Long (1985), LS (1987), Rist (1969)

¹⁸² In that case, I am partial to Eric Lewis' suggestion that the phenomenon of everlasting recurrence means that transworld individuals are not spatio-temporally continuous (1995: 96)

¹⁸³ See also Denyer, who says that past and future only apply within cosmic cycles (1988: 389)

- W) Chrysippus said that bodies are divided to infinity (*eis apeiron temnesthai*), and likewise things comparable to bodies (*ta tois sōmasi proseiokota*), such as surface, line, place, void, and time. But although these are divided to infinity, a body does not consist of infinitely many bodies, and the same applies to surface, line and place.¹⁸⁴

Notice that the things “comparable to bodies” are in fact incorporeal, certainly place, void and time are uncontestedly incorporeal. As for surface and line, I take this passage to be good evidence that the Stoics thought of limits, in one sense, as incorporeal; in another sense, they are neither corporeal nor incorporeal. I will address this third category and its guiding principle in the next chapter, and argue fully for this ambiguity and an open-ended list of incorporeals there. For now, I take it that the inclusion of surface and line with place, void and time is no barrier to reading “things comparable to bodies” as incorporeals.¹⁸⁵ So, what we can see about time is that it is continuous and divisible to infinity because the underlying body is so. Further, a commitment to continuum physics and infinite divisibility does not force the Stoics to deny natural joints in the world, as their critics would have it. Plutarch gripes that the Stoics flout common sense: what does it mean to say we have parts but not any particular number of them, nor infinitely many?

- X) Chrysippus says that when asked if we have parts (*merê*), and how many, and of what and how many parts they consist, we will operate a distinction. With regard to the inexact question we will reply that we consist of head, trunk and limbs—for that was all that the problem put to us amounted to. But if they extend their questions to the ultimate parts, we must not, he says, in reply concede any such things, but must say neither of what parts we consist, nor, likewise, of how many, either finite or infinite. I have, I think, quoted his actual words, so that you may see how he conserved the common conceptions, urging us to think of each body as consisting neither of certain parts nor of some number of them, either infinite or finite.¹⁸⁶

Chrysippus is happy to grant the obvious truth that we consist of head, trunk and limbs and that these are parts of us. His resistance is to the one who would press him to then specify what parts those in turn were made of, seeking to arrive at some ultimate number of parts or an actual infinity of parts. If someone seeks this kind of precision regarding parts, then the question has changed from a pragmatic one for which an inexact answer will do to one for which there is no answer, or at least no non-arbitrary answer.¹⁸⁷ So, for example, the Stoics define night and day in terms of the sun and moon, a month in terms of the lunar cycle,¹⁸⁸ and a year in terms of the sun’s position.¹⁸⁹ So they could answer a question like “What are the parts of the month?” in terms of each cycle of sunrise and sunset. But if someone then wants to know precisely where night ends and day begins, or how many ultimate parts there are in day, for that there is no non-arbitrary answer. How do we decide when the sun has risen and it is now day? Based on a position arbitrarily selected to count as sunrise. The Stoics also define seasons in terms of the natural joints in the material world: Diogenes reports that winter is air above the earth made cold by the sun’s

¹⁸⁴ 1.142,2-6 (50A); see also DL 7.150-1 (50B), who reports that “there is not some infinity which the division reaches, it is just unceasing”

¹⁸⁵ For comprehensive support of surface and line as incorporeals, see Robertson (2004); while I agree with Robertson’s reasons for seeing limits as incorporeal, I also think he has missed an essential piece of the puzzle in failing to recognize limits in a second sense, as mathematical entities that are Something neither corporeal nor incorporeal, which I argue for in Chapter IV.

¹⁸⁶ *Comm. not.* 1078E-1080E (50C3)

¹⁸⁷ As LS put it (1987: 303)

¹⁸⁸ Stobaeus reports that a month is the moon turning its brilliant part toward us, Ecl. 1.219.24

¹⁸⁹ Plut., *Comm. not.*, 1084C-D (50G); SE, *M.* 9.182-4 (70E3)

being further from the earth.¹⁹⁰ When exactly does this begin? Whenever we decide it does. So, as Brad Inwood puts it: “Time is indefinitely divisible just in the (rather Aristotelian) sense that one can go on mentally subdividing temporal moments of change, without ever reaching an atomic limit. But the parts of time limited by such a mental process are not true component parts.”¹⁹¹

In this spirit, one would say that while it is useful to divide time into hours, minutes and seconds, and we could go on dividing if it suited us, there is no reason to think that there are any such parts or even natural joints to be had. Likewise, I can say it’s 75 degrees Fahrenheit without implying that one could find 75 Fahrenheits floating around. Considered as a material whole, the world has no proper or ultimate parts.¹⁹² And this is perfectly compatible with a strong realism about the world’s natural joints, like the head, trunk and limbs (or sunrise and sunset) so long as one doesn’t press for a precise division between the parts; e.g., where exactly the head (neck) ends and trunk begins (or what precise moment the sun rises). According to thought, however, the world can be divided into infinitely many parts; there is no limit to the distinctions we can apply. As Long & Sedley put the point: “there are only as many dividing points on a runner’s journey as anyone may choose to mark off in thought. At some point our mental power to mark further divisions will fail us, and we will be left with an undivided, although divisible, portion of distance.”¹⁹³ This distinction between time considered on the one hand as an infinitely divisible continuous extension, subsisting according to the infinitely divisible continuous material world, and time considered on the other hand as an artificial part of that continuum limited by us (according to thought) is central to unraveling the remaining puzzles about time, and the ontology as a whole.

So, to recap, passages P and S capture the sense of time as incorporeal, the immaterial yet physical temporal extension of change. Passage Q infers from time’s subsistence on the world’s motion to its infinity, thereby emphasizing what time has in common with place, void and room *qua* incorporeal: that it has inherited its positive physical characteristics from underlying body. It is thereby infinite in all respects, namely in extending infinitely in either direction and in being divisible to infinity according to thought. Passage Q also introduces the term *huparchein*, and the notion of being present (*enestós*) in connection with the whole of time. I will now set about unraveling these threads. In ordinary Greek the term *huparchein* means to exist or subsist, where the latter terms are interchangeable. As we have seen, however, existence and subsistence are technical terms for the Stoics, so already we are outside ordinary usage. While some scholars have thought that *huparchein* is applicable to all incorporeals *qua* incorporeal,¹⁹⁴ most have recognized that the Stoics use it only to describe the present time (as opposed to past and future) and true sayables (as opposed to false). Still, this hardly settles matters, since many still render *huparchein* as *exists*, or as *existing now*.¹⁹⁵ Alternative renderings include *being real*,¹⁹⁶ and *being actual*,¹⁹⁷ as well as combinations of these, such as *actually existing*¹⁹⁸ or *being something real now*.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁰ 7.151

¹⁹¹ Brad Inwood (1991: n. 60, 265)

¹⁹² Plut., *St. rep.* 1054E-1055A (29D); Philo, *Quaest.* 2.4 (47R)

¹⁹³ 1987: 303-4; see also Inwood: “what is possible is that the process of division (*time*) is unceasing, goes on for as long as one cares to do so” (1991: 256); and Andreas Graeser (1978: 80)

¹⁹⁴ e.g., Pasquino (1978: 345)

¹⁹⁵ Boeri (2001: 10); Bréhier (1928: 58); D. Frede (1990: n. 53, 222); M. Frede (1994: 117); Goldschmidt (1969, 1972); Eric Lewis (1995: 90); Sorabji (1983)

¹⁹⁶ Long (1971: 89); Sedley (1999); Watson (1966: 40)

¹⁹⁷ Brunschwig (2003: n. 26, 215); Denyer (1988: 393-4, 396); AC Lloyd (1971); Schofield (1988: n. 28, 355)

¹⁹⁸ Kahn (1959: 165, 169); Tzamalikos (1991: 540)

The primary problem in all these cases is that the present, to which *huparchein* clearly applies, is thereby said to have a different ontological status from the past and future, which merely subsist (*huphestanai*). As Brunschwig puts the point: “To make a long story short, we might first point out that , although time shares with the void a number of important features (e.g., continuity, infinity, infinite divisibility), it is unlike it in that its parts do not seem to have the same ontological status as its whole, nor as each other.”²⁰⁰ If this is right, then the Stoics thought that time changes (or, perhaps on this view: times change) from subsisting to existing and back to subsisting when going from past to present to future. One would then rightly want to know how exactly such an entity goes about this ontological change, and where the boundaries are. Passage Q tells us that the whole of time is said to be present and *huparchein*. On the other hand, passage S3 testifies that no time is present exactly. It’s all quite mysterious. It is quite right that there is something to *huparxis* that expresses what is special about *now*, hence the notion of being actual is appealing. However, if being actual is taken in a modal sense contrasted with what is possible, then we have gone awry; and, if being real is contrasted with being unreal or illusory, we have gone awry in a different way. The desideratum is to find a principled contrast between *huparchein* and *hupostasis* so that we can see how the present is privileged, without undoing the status of time as incorporeal, or body-less.

I will render *huparchein*, to obtain or be the case, following Schofield.²⁰¹ This translation, as I will explain, captures what is right about other commentators’ renderings (that there is some sort of privileged status to the present), without implying that time undergoes some sort of metaphysical change. Schofield has pointed out “that for the Stoics the present has a feature which G.E.L. Owen christened ‘retrenchability’” with reference to *here*.²⁰² *Here* might designate a very small palce or a much larger one, from *here on my desk* to *here on this earth*; likewise, *now* might designate right this minute or, according to a larger compass, an entire year or even the whole of time. “The crucial point is that application of a retrenchable expression is always relative to some purpose of interest of the speaker, which need not remain the same from one occasion to the next.”²⁰³ As to *huparchein*, Schofield agrees that a technical use of the term is in play,²⁰⁴ and argues that we should understand it as *obtains* or *is the case* in light of its application to sayables. The present is retrenchable relative to the events that are taking place, and it is therefore retrenchable in obtaining as well (since only the present obtains). “What counts as present or not present is determined by the identity of the action in question, i.e., of the predicate which belongs to me or obtains/is the case for me.”²⁰⁵ Schofield goes on to point out, quite rightly, that “the reference of ‘now’ is not merely fixed by the interests and purposes of the speaker: it is an objective matter whether e.g. sitting or walking about is the case or is over and done with.”²⁰⁶ Hence Stobaeus gives crucial information in S4 when he likens the *huparxis* of the present with that of true predicates. I will return to this issue, what it means for a predicate to obtain, in the next section on *lekta*. Here I take from Schofield the notion that the

¹⁹⁹ Christensen (1962: 56)

²⁰⁰ 2003: 214

²⁰¹ 1988; Schofield rightly prefers *obtains* to *belongs*, which brings Aristotelian implications; see also Sorabji (1983: 22-25) for a helpful discussion

²⁰² 1988: 347

²⁰³ loc. cit.

²⁰⁴ Contra Sandbach (1975); see Schofield (1988: 351)

²⁰⁵ 1988: 357

²⁰⁶ n. 31, loc. cit.

present and obtaining are retrenchable for the Stoics, and that time is present in virtue of underlying body. The now of my walking obtains because I am walking now. If I stop walking, the now defined in terms of my walking ceases to obtain and merely subsists in the past. This is not a change of ontological status because time subsists all the while; rather, sometimes in addition to subsisting time obtains, namely when something is happening now.

So, the reason the whole of time is infinite, present and obtains, is that the Stoics' primary notion of time is of the whole. The primary notion of time is as the extension (*diastêma*) of the world's motion. Therefore, as we have seen, time is continuous and infinite in its extension in both directions (like void) and also in being infinitely divisible. Therefore, properly speaking, i.e., in response to the exact question, only the whole of time is present and it is what properly speaking obtains or is the case. When Chrysippus was pressed to be more precise than head, trunk and limbs, his response was to deny that there is any such answer. Here, if someone is dissatisfied with day, month and year and wishes a more exact delimitation of parts, the response is to deny that there is any such thing and stand by the view that properly speaking it is only the whole that is present and obtains.

Certainly this position sounds paradoxical, given the common sense notion of the present as a discrete time, a particular span or episode, like yesterday, or Wednesday. Surely, when I speak of the present I mean something other than the whole of time! But as we saw, in passage W time is infinitely divisible, because it something *comparable to (ton proseiokoton)* body. The resemblance to body signals the dependence of time on body for its positive physical characteristics, in this case its continuous nature. But as we saw with passage X, the Stoics do not thereby deny that the world has natural joints like head, trunk and limbs. If one wants to then demand a precise division in nature in answer to the exact question, there is no such thing to be found; that would be to look for Fahrenheits when people report the weather. So the Stoics can say that the basic notion of time is of the whole, continuous infinite incorporeal that subsists according to the whole, continuous material world in its everlasting recurrence. But they can also say, without pain of contradiction, that there are parts of time corresponding in varying degrees to the world's material natural joints. Continuum physics need not deny there's a baby in the bathwater, so to speak; they need not deny objective features of the world, like mountains and valleys, sunrise and sunset. Parts of time like today and yesterday have the rising and setting of sun and moon as their inexactly delimiting joints, while parts like minutes and seconds correspond to no precise division in nature.

By the same token, one ought not overestimate the role of the natural joints either, by giving priority to parts of time over the whole. As I mentioned, David Sedley has made the interesting suggestion that portions of time (like yesterday) are the true incorporeals while time as a whole (*qua* species of incorporeal) is a universal concept, i.e., an *ennoêma* like Man.²⁰⁷ One problem with this view is that all four incorporeals must be reduced to a concept by the same token, since each is a species. Such a literal interpretation of the incorporeals *qua* species is not justified, though. First, it swims upstream against strong evidence that time subsists as a continuous and infinite whole according to the motion of the world. Secondly, it's a conflation of object and meta languages. In the object language time is an incorporeal subsisting according to the world's motion; in the meta-language time is a species of incorporeal. But its mode of reality is not properly described as a

²⁰⁷ Sedley (1985: n. 5, 91)

species in the object language (the way the universal Man would be), which is what it takes to argue that time as a whole is an *ennoëma*.

Hence, properly speaking, only the whole of time is present; and the whiff of paradox is neutralized by the image of a year being present according to a larger compass. The greater and smaller compass signals the retrenchability of the present, which is perfectly compatible with a retreat to time as an infinite whole if someone should pester for precise divisions. We do indeed speak that way ordinarily without any difficulty; “it is now 2012” is a perfectly true statement, and not one we easily confuse with “it is now 1:32 p.m.” And when one realizes that there is no more precise way of delimiting time than to decide when the sun counts as having risen, and that there is no precise material limit between years, then the move to all of time being present (like a really big year) is natural enough. It is also a legitimate defense against the pest with the exact question. If you want to be exact, it’s the whole of time that is present and obtains. If you are comfortable being inexact, then we can speak meaningfully of parts and natural joints.

Let’s delve into passages R and S now. First, passage R confirms that time is the extension (*diastêma*) of motion, and adds that it is the measure (*metron*) of speed and slowness. The notion of measure need not bring Aristotelian concerns about who does the measuring; rather it’s just that if someone wanted to measure or count the rate of change, they would be thinking about time. The rate of change, i.e., the temporal extension itself, is perfectly objective in the sense that it is objectively the case that the hare runs faster than the tortoise. Now, time considered as a whole is infinite in every respect, namely it extends forever into the past and into the future as a continuum that is infinitely divisible; this is to be expected since time is an incorporeal, inheriting its positive physical characteristics from underlying body. The qualified infinity of the past and future points to the fact that the past extends infinitely in one direction, and the future extends infinitely in the other direction. That the Stoics thought of infinite extension in such terms has already been evidenced by their treatment of void as extending to infinity from all sides of the cosmos; and by the analogy with number.

The challenge now (no pun intended) is to account for the division between past and future and the limits of a span of time like *when* or *now*. R3 tells that *when* is partly past, partly future and partly present, but that the present itself is composed of past and future around the division itself between past and future. We still don’t know what the division between past and future consists in, but we can see that the Stoics are aiming to do justice to the idea that time is both extended and limited. Indeed, it is a common sense intuition that *when* refers to a certain finite span of time, say the time of Cato’s walking when he is *now* walking. It is just as true that he does not do all of his walking at once, but over time so that while it is true that Cato is walking it is also true that his present walking is partly past and partly future. In contrast, the division itself between past and future, will be point-like because it seeks precision; it will be an arbitrary division in time supplied by us because the answer required is exact (R5). Since properly speaking time is continuous and only present as a whole, we can only speak broadly and inexactly of the present (R4) in referring it to natural joints that are themselves part of the continuum.

Pierangiolo Berrettoni, inquiring from grammatical concerns, gives a similar analysis of the present as dynamic: “*enestôs* must be interpreted not in the common sense of an unqualified, static, present, but in its original perfect meaning of ‘begun and thus impending’, which fits the Stoics’ view

of the present as a mere transition from past into future.²⁰⁸ To this extent, i.e., to the extent that any precise division between past and future is unavailable, the present is specious and unreal along Aristotelian lines.²⁰⁹ If we choose to speak of the present as extended, as a span of time, then it must have parts that are past and future. But the limit of past and future will be constantly changing as the underlying change progresses. Not only is the world a continuum, it is in constant flux; so there could never be a fixed present for the Stoics. But, again, this need not commit them to making time unreal as so many have supposed. For example, Berrettoni takes the Stoic present to be an indication that “the *objective* view of time of classical Greek thought [had been] replaced by the subjective view of Hellenistic thought.”²¹⁰

Likewise, Sorabji concludes from the fact that no time is present as a whole, or obtains exactly, plus infinite divisibility and the overlap of past and future in the present, that the Stoics have fallen to Aristotle’s paradoxes and made time unreal.²¹¹ But the fact that they can agree with Aristotle that the present as limit of past and future is specious and unreal does not mean that time as a whole, time itself is unreal. That would be like concluding that because there is no precise division between head, trunk and limbs, that the body is unreal; or that because there is no fixed threshold for sunrise and sunset, that the daily cycle is unreal. The Stoics were in fact strong realists, not subjectivists. Indeed, this is a good example of how getting the details of a particular piece of the ontology wrong, is contagious to the whole system. Many scholars have taken the incorporeals to be mind-dependent entities, whether subjective or ideal, which wreaks havoc with their physicalist ontology. According to my schema, the incorporeals are all objective entities that are available for thought and discourse because they inherit their positive physical characteristics (that make them available for thought) from underlying body. This has been shown true of place, void and room; and now we can see it is true for time as well.

Let’s now handle the puzzles of passage S. First (S1) there is the matter of all things being in time, unless time is spoken of in two ways as the mass terms *earth*, *sea* and *void* are: as wholes and as their parts. One could say equally that every ship is on a part of the sea, or that it is always on the sea taken as a whole. Now the puzzle is to figure in what sense we can deny that everything is in time. It seems impossible to deny that everything is in time considered as a continuous, infinite whole, since that would imply that something exists outside of everything there is. But how does taking time in parts yield the result that some things are not in time? I suggest that we hear this as claiming that not everything is in any particular part of time, like yesterday, which is true enough. Many things did not and will not take place yesterday. We have already seen that time is infinitely extended in either direction (into the past and future), like void is extended infinitely from all sides of the cosmos. This favors a linear view of time, rather than circular, and a view that takes the whole of time to be not a single cycle, but the linear progression of repeating worlds, i.e., the infinitely extended continuous whole. It was S2 that posed the biggest puzzle: what does it mean to say that no time is wholly present because of divisibility to infinity? The answer should be familiar by now: because parts of time can be spoken of only broadly, no particular time (which is always a part of time) will be present except broadly. Only the whole of time is wholly present. Insofar as parts of time are composed of part past and part future, and the point-like division itself is specious,

²⁰⁸ 1989: 33

²⁰⁹ As LS point out (1987: 307)

²¹⁰ 1989: 57

²¹¹ 1983: 22

no single (*méthena*) time can be present, properly speaking. Only the whole of time is present and obtains, when we are seeking exact answers. When we are comfortable with speaking broadly, we can speak of parts. But when someone seeks greater precision, the parts of time will collapse into an arbitrary division that does not correspond to any natural joint in the world.

On the other hand, S4, only the present obtains, while the past and future merely subsist. This might seem like a problem, since we've just said that the now is specious. How can it be specious and obtain? The appeal to predicates gives us the answer. It remains correct, and indeed most precise, to say that only the whole of time obtains and is present. But as long as we are comfortable speaking broadly, there is no reason to ignore the world's natural joints as a way to delimit a certain span of time. Hence the present obtains when we identify it by reference to an event in the world, such as walking or sitting. Schofield's suggestion that the *huparxis* of the present is parasitic on the *huparxis* of predicates is very much to the point here. When Cato is walking, the predicate "walking" obtains or is the case; and, when we identify parts of time by reference to ways the world is (like that Cato is walking), the present obtains insofar as the predicate does. The *when* of Cato's walking obtains as long as the predicate does. But this does not signal a change of ontological status. Rather, time itself is always subsistent, whether past, present or future, because it is the incorporeal extension of the world's change. It would be truly contrary to common sense for the Stoics to deny that there is something special about the present, what's happening now. That's what the notion of obtaining or being the case is for. And the retrenchability of the present is no barrier to this special status. Indeed, though the world recurs everlastingly, each iteration is a material unfolding, *un déroulement*, so that my sitting obtains now but not five minutes ago because Zeus has made the world unfold in just this way.

Thus there need be no ontological switching going on for time to pass, or for the present to obtain in contrast to the past and future that only subsist. The difference is not that the present obtains instead of subsisting, but that it obtains in addition to subsisting. Insofar as time is the extension of motion, all of its parts as well as the whole of it subsist equally. Nothing is going to change the genetic or causal account of time, which always subsists according to the corporeal world. As the material world unfolds, one can say that the present time becomes actual instead of future, before passing into the past. But this does not make time a modal notion for the Stoics, so that it passes from future possible to present actual and then into past necessary. Stoic determinism dictates that past and future events are equally necessary, so the sense in which the present is actual is rather an ordinary language notion of actuality. It's Cato's actual walking that makes his walking be the case *now*, and in general concrete events that give the present, however temporarily, the additional property of obtaining.

The Sorites paradox levied against the Stoics by Plutarch can now be disarmed. Jacques Brunschwig rightly points out that the Stoics are subject to the paradox because *huparxis* is understood as a corporealization of time, so that it is open to seek a boundary between *huparxis* and *hupostasis*. If Chrysippus wants to say that night is a body, he should be prepared to say the same for evening, dawn and midnight. For there to be a problem, Plutarch must take Chrysippus to deny that the latter are also bodies. This is so on either a *modus ponens* (if night is a body, so are the others; but the others are not, therefore neither is body, contrary to what he claimed) or a *modus tollens* (if the others are not, neither is night; but night is a body, therefore the others are too, contrary to what he claimed) reading of the argument. We have already seen that a precise division between night, dawn and day are rejected as unreal because there are no such point-like divisions in nature, which

Plutarch could take as evidence that Chrysippus would reject these entities as bodies. Since Chrysippus says that night obtains when the moon is out, Plutarch understands him to say that night is a body. Brunschwig gives a similar interpretation: “these periods of time are in some way actualized by the motions of the celestial bodies that achieve their cyclical revolutions through them.”²¹² The persistent idea that to obtain (*buparchein*) and be actual entails a change of ontological category, i.e., a corporealization, invites the paradox unnecessarily. When night is defined in terms of the moon it is not thereby identified with the moon, any more than place is identified with its occupying body. Rather, the point of identifying the incorporeal in terms of body is to emphasize its body-less subsistence according to body, from which it inherits its positive physical characteristics. So Chrysippus is never committed to night as a body, not even when it obtains. When night obtains it is certainly because the moon is out, but night is not itself the moon because it is a part of time.

Once we see that obtaining does not mean *existing* so much as *being the case*, as Schofield has recommended, the paradox loses its force. Chrysippus is free to agree that night is an incorporeal, i.e., broadly according to the world’s natural joints like the moon rising, and evening, dawn and midnight are too. He is also free to agree that evening, dawn and midnight considered in an exact sense are not incorporeal because they correspond to no precise point-like divisions in nature, and likewise for night. We are dealing with two different phenomena, the basic notion of time as a continuous and infinite incorporeal whole with natural joints inherited from those of the underlying body, which we can speak of imprecisely but usefully (like head, trunk and limbs). And, on the other hand, a precise notion of parts, which the Stoics reject as unreal insofar as there are no precise divisions in nature; such divisions are made according to thought. There is no question of seeking a boundary between these two notions of time, the incorporeal and that according to thought, because they are two entirely different phenomena. Night, evening, dawn and midnight stand or fall together whether treated as incorporeals or as precise divisions according to thought. Thus there is no Sorites problem for Chrysippus. Once the Stoic view is seen aright, our problematic testimony falls into place. We can understand what hostile commentators say that is right, as well as what they say that is wrong and why.

In fact, this distinction between time as an incorporeal and time divided according to thought can be used to neutralize passage V, which many commentators have taken as evidence that the Stoics took time or even all the incorporeals to be mind-dependent. Proclus reports that the Stoics make time a mere thought, and very close to non-existent because incorporeals are inactive, non-existent and subsist merely in thought. What can we find that is true in this testimony? In general, time is not mind-dependent because it is an incorporeal subsisting according to change in the material world; that rate of change is available for thought whether anyone thinks about it or not.²¹³ On the other hand, having examined the Stoic rejection of precise parts of time as mental constructs, Proclus is not entirely wrong in saying that the Stoics make time a mere thought. It’s not the most perspicuous way to express their view of time, since the basic notion of time is as an incorporeal, which is not mind-dependent; but it’s not completely baseless either since precise limits of time are mental constructs. As to Proclus’ characterization of the incorporeals, it is certainly true that the Stoics make them non-existent, in the technical sense of the word they have introduced: what exists is what can act or be acted upon, and only bodies meet this criterion. Incorporeals are

²¹² 2003: 215

²¹³ Except Zeus, of course, but that’s another matter; see Cooper (2004: sections III and IV)

not capable of doing or undergoing, cannot make contact and are not causes, and in this precise sense they are indeed non-existent, inactive and weak. Time *qua* incorporeal is also rightly described as *close* to non-existent in the sense that, though incorporeals are less real for the Stoics than bodies are, nonetheless they meet the weaker Something criterion of reality that I described in chapter II. What goes wrong with Proclus is that he elides the difference between time as an incorporeal and according to thought, making the latter seem like their primary notion and applying it to incorporeals generally. It is no wonder that interpretations of Stoic incorporeals have differed so wildly, when our sources are so obtuse.

To summarize, time is the incorporeal extension of corporeal motion. Because corporeal motion is everlasting, time extends infinitely into the past and future; because the corporeal world is continuous and divisible to infinity, natural joints notwithstanding, time is as well. Time is an objective feature of the world, a proper object of thought and discourse. We can say truly that the hare runs faster than the tortoise, and falsely that writing a dissertation goes quickly. Time is not something visible, since it is only the material changes themselves that are available to the senses; it is nonetheless something *in relation to which* the commanding faculty can be impressed, like the model provided by the drill sergeant (passage B), which is an incorporeal impressor and therefore just as objective even if immaterial. Thus time meets the so-called thinkability criterion for objectivity; it is not ideal, subjective or mind-dependent but objectively available for thought because it subsists according to underlying body.

Will it also be a particular as required by the Not-Someone test (passage E)? The test, again, runs as follows: if you have a genuine objective particular, a Something, then it should come out true that if that thing is in Athens it is not in Megara. But such a reading of time seems straightforwardly false. Why should we say that the time in Athens is different from the time in Megara, or that having time in one place means there isn't any elsewhere? Furthermore, we have good reason to think of time as a mass term since passage S compares time with earth, sea and void in this respect. We encountered a similar difficulty in applying the *outis* test to void. It was false to say if there's empty space in Athens there isn't any in Megara. The solution was to recognize that void is strictly speaking extra-cosmic, and that as such it does pass the test: if (*per impossibile*) a void subsists according to this cosmos, then it cannot be over there subsisting according to that one (on the assumption that these two universes have no access to one another).

The solution for time will be similar. To apply the test to time intra-cosmically is to ask whether the parts of time are particulars. On the view I advocate, it is not the parts of time that are candidates for objective particular, but the whole of incorporeal time. So it would stand to reason that parts of time would fail the test; if the part of time that is today were not the same in Athens and Megara we would have bigger problems yet. So, to see how time considered as the infinite, whole incorporeal extension of time according to corporeal change is a particular we have to go outside the cosmos and apply an inter-cosmic test as we did with void. Thus we can preserve the general form of the *outis* test: If Something is here, it is not there. Given that time is defined as the extension of this world's motion, it seems perfectly true that if there ever were two materially distinct universes in motion that their sequences of time would be correspondingly particular and therefore distinct. After all, the particularity of the underlying body makes the subsistent incorporeals particular as well. If time subsists according to this world in its continuity and everlasting recurrence, then that same sequence of time cannot subsist according to another world. That other world can have its own sequence of time according to its own material change, but not

this one. Just as time inherits its infinite extension and divisibility from the material world on which it subsists, so it gets its particularity as well. Thus, it is not particular times that are the basic notion but the whole, which explains why, properly speaking, only the whole of time is present and obtains.

Counterintuitive as this view may be for those who take time to be composed of discrete parts like yesterday and today, it is entirely consistent with what the Stoics say about place, room and void as well as incorporeality generally. Furthermore, it does not create any additional fodder for the category of Not-Somethings. The whole of time is not a concept (*ennoëma*) in metaphysical limbo between Something and nothing at all, as Sedley has suggested; it is the well attested basic notion of time, which as a continuous whole is a particular entity. Thus we can rightly speak of *the* time, like we do of *the* void. This does not prevent us from thinking of time as a mass term too, since its parts will be homogenous with the whole. The fact that parts of time can be delimited according to natural joints in the material world, does not give parts priority over the whole or the present a higher ontological status than past and future. On the contrary, it grounds the technical sense of *huparchein* so that the Stoics can recognize that there is something special about the present, i.e., the now,²¹⁴ without contradiction. It is always and only time as a whole that obtains in the exact sense. But parts of time obtain when we identify them in terms of the worlds' currently existing natural joints. Indeed, it is the fact that Cato is walking now that makes the duration of his walking obtain. I will return to the notion of *huparxis* in the next section on the *lekton*.

III.3 The *Lekton*

The fourth canonical incorporeal, the *lekton*, or what is sayable, is the most difficult to assimilate to the principles of Stoic physicalism. As Catherine Atherton says: “the mere appearance of *lekta* in a materialist philosophy... is at the very least disconcerting.”²¹⁵ Now, it is uncontroversial that the *lekta* subsist and are classified as incorporeal, but as I have been showing, there is little agreement about what that amounts to. Roughly the meanings of our words, *lekta* surely cannot be extended or spatial like place, room, void, surface, and time; and indeed there is no testimony describing *lekta* in terms of *diastēma*. However, we do have ample testimony that the *lekta* subsist according to rational impressions (*logikē phantasias*), or thoughts, which are themselves corporeal. Subsisting according to the rational impression makes the *lekton* mind-dependent, and herein lies the problem. Commentators assume that the mind-dependence of *lekta* makes them entirely subjective or even unreal. While some embrace that subjectivity, others run from it and deny even that the *lekta* depend on rational impressions for their subsistence. Still others linger somewhere in the middle, feeling the pull of both sides without reconciling them. In fact, Dorothea Frede says the *lekta* “straddle the borderline between the mind-dependent and the mind-independent in an awkward enough way.”²¹⁶ As with the other incorporeals, I recommend that we lead with the ontology. The account of *lekta* as body-less dictates that they are mind-dependent—not because all

²¹⁴ Thus I take the terms *now* and *present* to be interchangeable. Both can be understood as applying properly only to the whole of time, and loosely to parts. Thus I can agree with Plutarch that what the Stoics say about now they will say about the present, and bypass the debates nicely described by Schofield (1988: 359) over whether to say that now has one sense as loosely present and the other as point-like, or whether now is the point-like notion and present is the broad notion.

²¹⁵ 1993: 254

²¹⁶ 1990: 217

incorporeals are mind-dependent, but because in this case the underlying body just is the mind. From that starting point, our task is to determine just how the *lekta* can be both mind-dependent and sufficiently objective to do their dialectical duties and meet the Something criterion for objective particulars.

First, some background: the term *lekton* is a neuter verbal adjective derived from the verb *legein*, to speak. As M. Frede points out, such forms can be used to indicate i) a passive state, i.e., *what gets said*, ii) a passive possibility, i.e., *what can be said*, and/or iii) an active sense, i.e., the *saying* itself. Frede takes it to be “obviously incorrect” that the Stoics used the third sense, as it would equate the *lekton* with the utterance itself, i.e., the sounds one makes, rather than what gets said.²¹⁷ I am not so sure that the active sense need equate the *lekton* with utterance, since one could hold that it conveys the *act* of saying; the act of saying requires an utterance, but need not thereby be reduced to the utterance. Indeed, one of the things at issue in the literature is whether to think of *lekton* in the sense of *sayable* or *saying*. Nonetheless, I think Frede is right that we should read *lekton* in the passive sense, but I think that the sayable-saying debate takes place in adjudicating between senses i and ii. Sense i, *what gets said*, implies a saying corresponding to what gets said, while sense ii, *what can be said*, requires no actual saying. Frede argues that because *lekta* have some status independent of being said, we should take only sense ii—this, however, is to assume the result. I will argue that the primary sense is i, and that sense ii emerges from it so that if there were never any sayings, nothing would ever get said and there would therefore be nothing sayable either.²¹⁸ To anticipate, I take the Stoics to have had a certain *meaning is use* doctrine such that what can be said is a function of what does get said. The primary purpose of language is to express our thoughts, which are sayable in what I take to be the fundamental passive modal sense; but because we have a recursive system for doing so, i.e., a language, many things are *sayable* independent of being said, which is a secondary passive modal sense.

Translations of *lekton* vary in the literature from *what is meant*,²¹⁹ *what is or can be stated*,²²⁰ *what is and can be stated*,²²¹ *what can be expressed*,²²² *what is said*,²²³ and *what is sayable*.²²⁴ *Sayable* has become the conventional translation, and I will adopt it for the sake of simplicity as well as to acknowledge the passive modal aspect to *lekton*. Another important preliminary is the fact that the Stoics recognized a variety of different sayables, including questions, inquiries, oaths, commands, *et al.* in addition to the statement or proposition (*axiōma*).²²⁵ The *axiōma* is an assertion and, accordingly, what bears truth value; it is what is referred to when we are told that true and false is in the sphere of the *lekton*.²²⁶ Further, the Stoics make a distinction between the complete and incomplete sayable. The

²¹⁷ 1994: 109-10

²¹⁸ One can imagine a counterexample to this point: if people had rational impressions but no vocal cords the objective content of the rational impression would still be sayable in the passive modal sense. But this is not what Frede has in mind for sense ii, since he denies that the *lekton* depends on the rational impression. Rather, he means that what is sayable are facts or truths that are available for us to read off the world whether anyone does so or not.

²¹⁹ Kneales (1962); Mates (1961: 11, 22); Rist (1971: 38)

²²⁰ D. Frede (1990: 213)

²²¹ Graeser (1978: 88)

²²² Watson (1966), with Bréhier's *exprimable* (1928)

²²³ Long: “In sense *lekton* can hardly be distinguished from τὸ λεγόμενον,” which is a passive participle meaning *what is said* (1971: n. 13); see also Urs Egli (1978: 134)

²²⁴ LS (1987: 33)

²²⁵ DL 7.66-7

²²⁶ DL 7.65 (34A), SE, *M.*, 8.74 (34B)

complete sayable is a whole proposition expressing a complete state of affairs (*pragma*); for example, “Cato walks” is a complete statement evaluable for truth or falsity. The incomplete sayable, on the other hand, is a predicate (*kategorêma*) expressed in this example by “walks;” such a *lekton* is not evaluable for truth and falsity because it is incomplete—one wants to know “who?”²²⁷ The predicate thus corresponds to the verb in a sentence, which requires a subject to express a complete proposition.

The nature of the subject term in turn determines whether the complete sayable is definite, indefinite or intermediate.²²⁸ The definite proposition is expressed through demonstrative reference (*deixis*), and is that in virtue of which the indefinite and intermediate propositions will be true. So a definite proposition will be of the form “This one walks;” the indefinite proposition corresponds to “Someone walks;” and the intermediate to “Cato walks.” The latter two will be true because an *axiôma* with deictic reference is true; “Cato walks” is true because “this one walks” is true.²²⁹ In addition, the Stoics developed a sophisticated taxonomy of propositions (*axiômata*) including simple (e.g., negative, negatively assertoric, privative, etc.)²³⁰ and non-simple (e.g., conditional, conjunctive, disjunctive, etc.)²³¹ I will not canvas the Stoic system of propositions here, as it would take me too far into the philosophy of language proper and away from my metaphysical focus. For my purposes it is important to know that the *axiôma* is one kind of *lekton*, namely the kind that is true or false; that *axiômata* enter logical relations with one another in non-simple propositions; and that the Stoics recognized predicates (*kategorêmata*) as a kind of deficient or incomplete *lekton*. While the predicate “walks” does not yet say something we can evaluate for truth/falsity or act upon, it is clearly something *sayable* about something in the world and thus an integral component of the complete *lekton*.

My last piece of introduction will be an overview of the duties or role of *lekta* in Stoic philosophy. An answer to the question “what are *lekta*?” must account for how are they used. Dorothea Frede outlines four central reasons the Stoics countenanced sayables: 1) “only the shadowy netherworld of ‘sayables’ and stateables stands between the Stoics and a crass physical realism” like that of the Giants in Plato’s *Sophist*. 2) “if there were no sayables and stateables we could only talk about and know of the things we have literally experienced ourselves...we could not sensibly talk about anything else, be it in the past, present or future...nor could we have impressions (*φαντασίαι*) of incorporeals or of thoughts that are grasped by reason itself, a major concern in Stoic epistemology (cf. DL VII 51).” 3) “There would be *logical* problems: Statements must have a content to make sense, and the content must be abstractable from what is immediately corporeally given.” And 4) “if there were no ‘sayables’ as intendable objects there could be no *intersubjectivity*, for we could never be talking about the same thing. You would be talking about your impressions, I about mine.”²³² So the *lekta* are required for communication, truth, knowledge, and to enter logical relations. Frede concludes from these considerations that the Stoic *lekta* subsist like Frege’s thoughts in a third realm outside space and time and independent from the existence of human beings at all. It is this result, common in the literature, which I will resist. If the Stoics put *lekta* into

²²⁷ DL 7.63-4 (33FG)

²²⁸ SE, *M.* 8.93-8 (34H), 100 (34I)

²²⁹ On this score people have found similarity with Russell and Quine on proper names

²³⁰ DL 7.69-70 (34K)

²³¹ DL 7.71-4 (35A)

²³² 1990: 218-9, original emphasis

some sort of third realm, they might not be crude physical realists like the Giants but they also would not be coherent physicalists. I now turn to the textual evidence.

- Y) Voice (*phônê*) and speech (*lexis*) differ, because voice is sound (*êchos*) but only speech is articulate (*enarthron*). And speech differs from language (*logos*) because language is always significant (*sêmantikos*), but speech can lack significance (*asêmantos*), e.g. *blituri*, and language not at all (*oudamôs*). Furthermore, speaking (*to legein*) differs from uttering (*prophēsthai*); for voicings (*phônai*) are uttered, but states of affairs (*pragmata*) are said (*legetai*), which, after all, are in fact sayables (*lekta*).²³³

There is not yet much to quibble over, though the sense of *pragma* will flare up shortly. The immediate general point is that what makes us different from animals is language, because language is meaningful (significant, semantic) whereas speech never is. A bird's song may be beautifully articulate, but it will not express a state of affairs (*pragma*), i.e., it will not have propositional content or signify a *lekton*. Note also that for the Stoics voice, speech and language are all corporeal in being sounds; voice is mere sound, speech is articulate and may or may not be significant, while language is always significant (indeed, that's what makes it language). Thus uttering is a matter of making sounds, while speaking is a matter of making sounds that *say* something, namely an incorporeal state of affairs that is sayable, i.e., *lekton*. It is thus no surprise to find the *lekton* identified not only as *what is said* (in the passive sense), but as *what is signified* by language and therefore what is true or false:

- (Z) (1) There was another disagreement among philosophers [concerning what is true]; some took what is true and false (*to alêthes kai pseudos*) to be in the sphere of what is signified (*to sêmainomenon*), others in the sphere of voice, and others in the movement of thought (*peri tei kinêsei tês dianoias*). (2) And the Stoics in fact defended the first opinion, saying that the three are yoked together: what is signified (*to sêmainomenon*), what signifies (*sêmainon*), and the bearer (*to tungchanon*). Of these, what signifies is the voice, for instance "Dion;" what is signified is the state of affairs itself (*auto to pragma*) revealed (*dêloumenon*) by it [the voice], which we on the one hand apprehend (*antilambanometha*) subsisting alongside (*parhuphistamenou*) our thought (*dianoia*), but barbarians do not understand (*epaiouisi*) though they hear the voice; and the bearer is the external object (*to êktos hupokeimenon*), for instance Dion himself. (3) And of these, two are bodies, just as the voice and bearer are, but one is incorporeal (*asômaton*), as the state of affairs (*pragma*) signified, i.e., what is sayable (*lekton*), is, which is true or false.²³⁴

Note that the *lekton* itself is the bearer of truth value, not the sentence; *lekton* is what is sayable by means of language, therefore it is what is signified by words and *it* is true or false.²³⁵ The term *dêloumenon* captures this relationship between voice (the spoken word that signifies) and *lekton* (the state of affairs (*pragma*) signified). *Dêloumenon* means what is *made clear, revealed, shown, set forth* or *signified*. Though *signified* works nicely in this semantic context, it wouldn't capture the broader sense

²³³ DL 7.57 (33A); see also DL 7.55-6

²³⁴ SE, M. 8.11-12 (33B)

²³⁵ It has been natural to find here a certain resemblance to Frege's distinction between sign, sense and reference, or Carnap's between designator, intension and extension, as Benson Mates (1961) and many others have. I cannot possibly undertake a proper analysis of *lekta* in terms of contemporary theories of language while my focus is on the metaphysics of *lekta*. Nonetheless, much of what I have to say will bear on these questions, which I will point out as I proceed. For now I will say, with A.C. Lloyd, that the Stoics "were the only ancient philosophers who would have been at home in the modern discussions about proper names, definite descriptions and referring expressions, to say nothing of meaning and truth conditions" (1971: 69); see also Benson Mates (1961: p. 19 ff.); Long (1971: 78); Pasquino (1978); Kahn (Frege and Carnap) (1959: 68); Denyer (against a Frege reading (1988: 378 ff.); Graeser (Frege, Bolzano, Popper, Quine (1978); Watson (Russell) (1966: appendix I)

of *revealing* that is more clearly in play in other uses of the term, e.g., in the definition of the impression as what reveals itself and its cause, and generally in the way that sense-perception reveals the world to us through impressions.²³⁶ Further, since *sêmainomenon* literally means *what is signified* and *dêloumenon* illustrates the relation between word and *lekton*, it is perhaps more informative to use the translation *reveal* as long as we keep in mind that there is no stretch in the sense of *dêloumenon* for it to gloss *signify* as it does here.

Now, the term *tunchanon* means literally *what is hit upon, reached or obtained*. In this schema the *tunchanon* is clearly the external referent or object, Dion, that we hit upon with his name. I render the term with Long & Sedley as *bearer*;²³⁷ Dion bears the name “Dion.” This translation captures the fact that proper reference for the Stoics is deictic.²³⁸ Now, it is unfortunate that Sextus uses the individual Dion and his name to illustrate the distinction between signifier, what is signified and bearer because *lekta* are propositional and designate whole states of affairs. Though the *lekta* say things about the world and are therefore inherently referential, they do not merely name items in the world; rather, they express states of affairs. As scholars have noted,²³⁹ it would have made much more sense to cite an example like “Dion walks” corresponding to Dion’s walking, as in fact Seneca does (passage BB below). The problem is not acute because Sextus illustrates what he needs to, namely the difference between the word and the external referent, without any corresponding implication that *lekta* are mere names rather propositional entities. Indeed, he takes care to equate the *lekta* with complete states of affairs, or *pragmata*.

While the translations of *dêloumenon* and *tunchanon* are straightforward enough, *pragma* is more difficult to render. The literal meaning from its root *prattein*, to do, is *what has been done*; but it is used in a broader sense like the Latin *res*, meaning *thing*. It can take the sense of *thing done, matter, affair, state of affairs, business, object of consideration*, or even *trouble*. These are all different kinds of *things* in a sense that does not equate with concrete objects like stones and shoes. Indeed, consider an ordinary explanation in English that begins as follows: “the thing is...” This sense best captures the breadth of the Greek term *pragma*. In the context of *lekta* it is often translated *state of affairs*,²⁴⁰ which I have embraced because I take it to signal that the *lekton* is a propositional thing, so that what we say when we utter *lekta* is not names but complete propositional contents. If I had rendered *pragmata* in passage Y as *things*, however, the text would hardly have been comprehensible: “it is *things* that are said, which, after all, are in fact *lekta*.” But I do think it is the sense in play when *lekta* are described as *pragmata*. Thus in passage Z, we should read “what is signified is the *thing* itself revealed by voice, which we apprehend subsisting alongside our thought.” A close alternative for *pragma* in the literature is “the actual entity,”²⁴¹ which is compatible with what I am saying but overwrought and unnecessarily implies a concrete, material object. Perhaps the best translation

²³⁶ Aëtius, *De placitis* 4.12.1-5 (39B); Cicero, *Acad.* 1.40-1 (40B); Seneca, *Ep.* 117.13 (33E), passage BB below

²³⁷ 1987: 201

²³⁸ Whether “Dion” connotes a case that should itself be considered a *lekton* is not something I will address here. M. Frede argues nicely that case should be considered *lekton* in an attenuated sense. Nothing I have to say is incompatible with cases being considered as *lekta*. The question has much to do with determining whether to say the Stoics should be considered more like Frege or Russell.

²³⁹ e.g., Michael Frede (1994: 119); LS (1987)

²⁴⁰ Long (1971: 77); LS (1987:195-202); and many others. Catherine Atherton (1993) thinks *pragma* cannot possibly be state of affairs because it would conflict with the incomplete *lekta* that do not express complete states of affairs; this is easily surmountable since the Stoics can recognize an incomplete thing to say about various things in the world

²⁴¹ Mates (1961: 11); Watson (1966: 41)

would be *the semantic thing*, or *propositional thing*.²⁴² Such a translation would not be amiss for philosophers whose highest category of being is Something, I suppose.

Terminological introductions aside, we now run into a knot of puzzles over what it is that *has* meaning, or what *the semantic thing* attaches to: the words or the world. On the world view it is Dion and the material world that get meanings by being signified in words. Seeing the relation this way works in favor of an interpretation of *lekta* as mind-independent, and such an interpreter can lean on the sense of *pragmata* as *things done* to support this reading. Bréhier, for example, takes the bearer, i.e., Dion himself, but not the sound (“Dion”) to have an additional attribute for a Greek speaker as opposed to a barbarian, namely the attribute of being signified by the word. What is signified (*sêmainomenon*) is thus to be read as *the object signified* so that the *sêmainomenon* is just the *tungchanon* (bearer) plus meaning. *Being said* is thus a predicate (*katégorêma*) of the object or bearer.²⁴³ In fact, for Bréhier, every incorporeal is just a predicate at the surface of body, “the ideal and unreal limit” of the material world.²⁴⁴ The eventual consequence, as Bréhier sees it, is that Stoic logic is developed without contact with reality or thought, yielding an impoverished dialectic incapable of reproducing real connections among things in the material world. Given that for the Stoics knowledge of the world is found in the cognitive impression (*phantasia kataleptikê*), which is a modification of the corporeal soul, Bréhier concludes that this kind of knowledge is inexpressible and has no kind of relation to dialectical knowledge or language, which is about unreal facts and events.²⁴⁵ This would be an unfortunate result for the Stoics, as it would make logic and dialectic virtually useless in our pursuit of the good life through understanding of the world. If real knowledge comes just from direct, ineffable and mystical intuition of the world, why bother with logic, dialectic and *lekta*? These look like the expendable appendix of Stoic philosophy rather than the very conduit to happiness. There are more reasons than this to reject the view, as we will see, but it’s always helpful to keep an eye on the ultimate upshot to make sure we haven’t landed the Stoics absurdity as I think Bréhier has.

On a word view, it is the words we utter (*prophêresthai*) that have meaning, which is why they count as speaking (*legein*). Unfortunately, some have thought that reading the words as what have meaning shows that the Stoics had a purely intensional theory of meaning, indeed one in which there is no notion of reference at work. This is to take mind-dependence to a subjective extreme that clashes with the Stoics’ general realism and the work required of *lekta* for dialectic as well as ethics.²⁴⁶ For instance, Graeser reports: “The Stoics, then, held a fundamentally nonreferential or rather intensional theory of meaning, one in which meanings in general are viewed as linguistic contents isomorphically related to the respective sign on the level of expression. The general term

²⁴² Barnes’ translation (1999: 193, 208) is interesting: the *pragma* is the object itself shown by the utterance, where the object itself is the *lekton*; he then renders *tungchanon* as *what obtains*, so that the Stoics would say that Dion obtains the sayable. Though I agree with Barnes’ sentiment that the *lekton* is the semantic object or entity, I prefer to reserve *object* for *tungchanon* and *obtains* for *huparxis*; note that Barnes’ translation is licensed by taking *huparxis* to mean *existence*; since Dion as *tungchanon* is indeed an existing object, the move to what obtains seems innocent enough. But as I undertook to show in connection with time, and will rejoin in this section, *huparxis* does not mean *existence* for the Stoics. Another alternative for *pragmata* is matters of discourse (Mates, 1961: 12)

²⁴³ 1928: 14-15

²⁴⁴ op. cit., p. 62

²⁴⁵ loc. cit.

²⁴⁶ It is also to ignore the force of *tungchanon*, the privileged status of deictic propositions, and Seneca’s testimony below (passage BB) that there is a great difference between saying something about Cato and naming him.

for such linguistic contents was *lekton*.²⁴⁷ Notice that this result is the same as Bréhier's, albeit from the world perspective: the *lekton* is divorced from our knowledge of the world. But I take it, with D. Frede's second desideratum above, that such a view renders Stoic epistemology impotent and is thus to be avoided. Graeser's diagnosis is that insofar as the *lekton* is linguistic, it is a synonym of *sêmainomenon*; but he also finds the *lekton* taken in this sense to be in tension with its role as *what is said* or *meant*; the upshot is that "the term *lekton* underwent a semantic development that is not altogether easy to trace,"²⁴⁸ which makes the Stoic theory of *lekta* look less like doctrine and more like indiscriminate metaphysical fumbling.

This tension between *lekta* as *what is signified* and as *what is said* is one I find unnecessary; in fact I find it necessary that they be equated for the Stoics. But the assumption is widespread, and has prompted interpretations that find the Stoics changing their views on the *lekta* so that there is scarcely a doctrine to be found. For instance, Michael Frede, coming from the world perspective, takes the original notion of the *lekton* to be metaphysical in the sense of *what can be said*, and only later logical or semantic in the sense of *what is signified* and *what is meant*.²⁴⁹ Frede's metaphysical notion is what I have been calling the world view according to which *lekta* are the objective features of the world, or facts, that are available for us to say. Like Bréhier, he takes *lekta* and predicates (incomplete *lekta*) to be entities over and above material objects and their properties; *lekta* are *attributes* true of the entities that have them, and are not logical or linguistic. Facts for Frede are not thought contents but true things to say that are independent of any saying. From this original and basic notion, Frede observes a slide into the logical and linguistic domain in which *lekta* can be true or false expressions or what one has in mind.²⁵⁰ On my view, *lekta* express the content of our rational impressions and are thereby what is said, signified and thought, all at once. I don't deny that the *lekton* was originally a metaphysical notion for the Stoics; on the contrary, as I have been saying, I think the Stoics were guided by their ontological principles in all aspects of their philosophy. But I certainly don't see why a metaphysical notion need exclude logic or meaning, particularly when the basic notion is admittedly described as *what can be said*.

Furthermore, when we lead with the ontology it is readily apparent that the relation between thought and *lekta* is no mere afterthought or eventual evolution for the Stoics. Rather, the *lekton* gets its semantic content (and thus is what it is) from the rational impression it expresses; and since the rational impression is itself a body, we need look no further for an account of how the *lekta* are body-less. Evidence that the Stoics took *lekta* to subsist on the rational impression as underlying body is abundant (this is, of course, a relative term—in Stoic scholarship a handful of testimony is an abundance).

AA) The Stoics commonly maintained that the true (*to alêthes*) and false (*to pseudos*) are in the sayable (*lekton*). And they say the sayable is (*huparchein*) what subsists (*huphistamenon*) according to (*kata*) the rational impression (*logikê phantasia*), and the rational impression is that according to which what is impressed (*to phantasthen*) can be produced (*parastêsai*) in language (*en logoi*).²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ 1978: 87; see also Christensen, who says that for the Stoics meaning is formally identical with its sound, and because there is no such formal identity in the corporeal world, meanings are non-corporeal (*asômata*) and non-objective; again, this signals how intertwined our threads are (1962: 46); see also Imbert (1978)

²⁴⁸ 1978: 87

²⁴⁹ See also Atherton (1993: 252-3, esp. n. 29)

²⁵⁰ 1994: 112-117; see also Brunschwig (2003: 218)

²⁵¹ SE, M. 8.70 (51C)

So, in language exactly parallel to the other incorporeals, the *lekton* subsists according to the rational impression; and the rational impression is a corporeal state characterized precisely by the fact that its content (*to phantasthen*)²⁵² can be expressed in words. While the *lekton* is not three-dimensional, or extended like place, void and time, it would not be un-Stoic to say that the *lekton* is the *semantic dimension* of the physical world. Perhaps this is even the force of calling the *lekton* a *pragma*: recognizing it would not do to characterize the *lekton* in spatial terms like *diastēma*, perhaps the Stoics settled on *pragma* to signal that the *lekta* are semantic entities²⁵³ whose propositional content is inherited from underlying body, namely the rational impression. In addition, we can observe that the verb *parastēsai* conveys a causal or dependent relationship between mind and *lekton*. Its meanings include: *to furnish, supply, deliver, produce, render, present, offer, suggest, and put before the mind*. Thus according to this testimony the mind produces *lekta* in words (*logoi*) that reveal (*déloumenon*) their objective content, which is the body-less semantic thing (*pragma*) we call *lekton*.

That we should be able to do so is no great surprise. To be the rational animal is to be the semantic animal, and for our thoughts to be inherently propositional. As A.A. Long shows, the commanding faculty is rational because our experience is mediated by concepts and language such that for every rational representation there is a *lekton*; *lekta* specify the propositional content of the impression, the way objects are presented to us.²⁵⁴ Claude Imbert makes a similar point when she says that it is a defining trait of the rational representation that it is discursive; thought is internal discourse (*endiathētos logos*) or silent soliloquy, already fit for expression in words so that there is “an organic link between impression and discourse [speaking or saying].”²⁵⁵

Thus *lekta* don’t get their propositional structure or content from the world, but from the mind that organizes and interprets input according to the concepts that constitute its rationality. The impressor (*to phantasthen*) is not itself propositional, though our articulation of the impression it has made must be.²⁵⁶ We might have anticipated such a result given the Stoic commitment to continuum physics. If *lekta* subsisted according to the world rather than the mind, we would have something more precise than the natural joints spoken of broadly and inexactly—indeed an atomistic picture of the world anathema to the Stoics, and therefore an interpretation to avoid. But to say that *lekta* get their objective content from the rational impression and deny they subsist as facts we read off the world is not to divorce them from the world. On the contrary, it is the world that is making the impressions to begin with. Take now Seneca’s testimony:

BB) (1) There are, he [the Stoic] says, corporeal natures (*naturae corporum*), for instance, this is a man, this is a horse. These are accompanied by (*sequuntur*) movements of thought (*motus animorum*), which can make enunciations about bodies (*enuntiativi corporum*). (2) These movements have their own property (*proprium quiddam*), which is separate from bodies (*a corporibus seductum*). For example, I see Cato walking: sense perception has revealed this (*hoc sensus ostendit*) and my mind has believed it (*animus credidit*). What I see is a body, and it is to a

²⁵² As LS render *to phantasthen*; Mates goes with “objective content,” 1961: 22; see also Christensen: “That, in a presentation [impression], which is conveyed by a correctly corresponding statement is called the ‘presentatum’ (φαντασθέν). This will be seen to amount in practice to the ‘meaning’ of a statement (λεκτόν)” (1962: 56); see also Verbeke, who says that the content of the *lekton* establishes itself before the gaze of reason, which expresses it in interior or exterior words (1978: 266)

²⁵³ Things? Thingies? Des trucs sémantiques?

²⁵⁴ 1996: 273-4, 284; Long (1978: 71-3); LS (1987: 240)

²⁵⁵ 1978: 81, 83, 89

²⁵⁶ As Long confirms (1978: 72)

body that I have directed my eyes and mind. Then I say “Cato is walking.” What I now utter (he says) is not a body but a certain enunciation (*enuntiativum*) about body, which some call a proposition (*vocant*), others a thing enunciated (*enuntiatum*), and others a thing said (*edictum*). (3) So when we say “wisdom” (*sapientiam*), we understand something corporeal; when we say “He is wise,” we are speaking about a body. There’s a very great difference between naming *it* and speaking *about it*.²⁵⁷

It is clear in this passage that motions of thought are what produce *lekta*; their peculiar property (*proprium quiddam*) is this very ability to say things about the world in response to the impressions it makes on the commanding faculty. Notice that the Latin *quid* can also be translated *thing*, so really their *proprium quiddam* is the ability to produce the semantic thing. In fact, the property of thought that is separate (*seductum*) from body is the sayable itself that thought expresses; this separation does not imply ontological independence, but the fact that sayables cannot be reduced to thoughts; they are something over and above the movements of thought, though dependent. The verb *seduco* is apt: it means *to take or lead apart*, which implies that something must be doing the leading; my suggestion is that thought produces the sayable, which is something apart from the thought itself because the thought leads it apart. It is also clear that what the mind produces is something propositional, not a mere name: as Seneca says, there is big difference between saying something about Cato and naming him. This testimony also shows that the Stoics were clearly live to the notion of reference, as previously evidenced by the notion of *tungchanon* and the priority of deictic propositions over those with names or indefinite pronouns in the subject role. Thus, whether *lekta* are like Fregean senses or not, they are not without reference to the world because our impressions and concepts themselves are connected with the world.

This reading of *lekta* as subsisting according to the rational impression, and thus as mind-dependent is substantiated by the following testimony from Diogenes.

CC) For the impression arises first (*proēgeitai*), and then thought, which has the power of speaking out (*hē dianoia eklalētikē huparchousā*), expresses (*ekpherei*) in language what it experiences by the agency of (*hupo*) the impression.²⁵⁸

DD)The topic of what is signified (*peri tōn sēmainomenōn*) is analyzed into the topic of impressions (*peri tōn phantasiōn*) and the sayables subsisting out of them [i.e., impressions] (*tōn ek toutōn huphistamenōn lekton*).²⁵⁹

Passage CC leaves no doubt as to the sequence of events: *first*, we have an impression, *then* thought expresses the content of the impression in words. That this is not merely sequential but causal is explicit in passage DD where the *lekta* are said to subsist *out of* impressions; the *out of* (*ek*) locution in Greek indicates a compositional relation, therefore a straightforward and strong dependence of incorporeal *lekta* on body. In addition, the prepositional phrase *kata logikēn phantasian* in AA conveys this dependence in two ways: first, it is embedded in the substantive participial phrase *to huphistamenōn* (what subsists), establishing that *kata logikēn phantasian* indicates something essential to the manner of the *lekton*’s subsistence; second, the preposition *kata* of itself implies a dependence relation, as captured by the conventional translation *according to*.

²⁵⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 117.13 (33E)

²⁵⁸ 7.49 (33D)

²⁵⁹ DL 7.43 (31A7)

Thus, if nothing else, we are in a position to say with Blank and Atherton that *lekta* “are defined as dependent (in a way that, it must be admitted, is not entirely clear) on rational thoughts, but seem to be the contents of those thoughts and of the sentences that express them; they are thus shareable and communicable by members of a linguistic community, in a way that private psychological states are not.”²⁶⁰ This marks the first and fundamental sense in which *lekton* is rightly read in the passive modal sense: it is the *sayable* content of our impression. Because our impressions are rational (*logikê*), they are propositional and available to be expressed in words whether we express them or not.²⁶¹

Commentators with the world-dependent view deny the *lekton* is sayable in this sense, and are forced to work around this strong textual evidence that *lekta* depend for their reality on rational impressions. One way to do so is to acknowledge that *lekta* and thoughts co-vary without committing to their dependence on thoughts. For example, Kahn renders *kata* as *parallel to* so that our testimony says *lekta* subsist parallel to the rational impression; but this is a strained way to render *kata*, and the resulting Fregean analysis makes *lekta* non-spatiotemporal abstracta only occasionally connected to rational impressions.²⁶² Not only does this buck the strong evidence we have seen that *lekta* do subsist according to rational impressions, it takes them outside a physicalist ontology altogether. The Stoics are back to being closet Platonists. Indeed, M. Frede reads these passages as a caution that we not confuse *lekta*, which are mind-independent, with thoughts.²⁶³ This is a creative solution, and he is certainly right that the *lekton* is not to be reduced to the underlying thought; however, to deny the causal dependence is to swim upstream of the textual evidence.

Unfortunately, those who embrace the mind-dependence of *lekta* often go too far in the subjectivist direction. According to Imbert, for example, the *lekton* “has physical solidarity with an act of representation [impression], be it the one expressed by the speaker, or the one reconstituted by the interlocutor;” it follows for Imbert that discourse can make no claim to express external reality, and there can be no truth outside the speaker and hearer, i.e., interpreter.²⁶⁴ This view is quite radical, even Protagorean in its separation of mind (and therefore *lekta*) from world. Graeser takes a similar view: “the Stoics implied that ontological analysis is bound to be subjective, or rather functional, in that it is man’s mind that superimposes its concepts on reality.”²⁶⁵ Christensen as well, when he reports that causal analysis is entirely a product of thought, and “since significata [meanings] are defined as non-objective, they cannot be the subject-matter of any science dealing with external reality.”²⁶⁶ And Watson: “For *lekta* are judgments which can be expressed in words: the resulting statements announce the linkings [between things in the world] which we find it necessary and convenient to make concerning reality for the purpose of discourse...these are the patterns which the mind tends naturally to impose on reality when confronted with a certain amount of material.”²⁶⁷ And: “The Stoics, too, were particularly insistent that all our statements were

²⁶⁰ 2003: 314-5

²⁶¹ This, of course, is not the sense in which world view commentators take the *lekton* to be sayable; they take it to be sayable independent of thought. I take this second sense to be live for the Stoics but parasitic on the fact that our thoughts are sayable in this more fundamental sense; more on this ahead.

²⁶² 1959: 168; see also Brunschwig, who in this spirit uses *subsists in conformity with* and *subsists along with* (2003: 218)

²⁶³ M. Frede (1994: 118)

²⁶⁴ 1978: 102

²⁶⁵ 1978: 98

²⁶⁶ 1962: 48 (quotation), 53

²⁶⁷ 1966: 27-8, 82; see also Boeri, who takes *lekta* to “play a crucial role in the constitution of the real and corporeal world” (2001: 11)

interpretations of reality, meanings imposed on reality rather than reality itself.”²⁶⁸ While I agree that *lekta* do not subsist on the world itself, but rather on our impressions, views like Imbert’s is clearly a violation of the intersubjectivity requirement laid out by D. Frede.

It is time now to deal head on with the strongest evidence on behalf of the world view, which does indeed speak against the extreme subjectivist word view but not, as I will show, against mind-dependence in the sense I have been illustrating. The first is that true propositions (*axiōmata*) play the role of facts, and facts can hardly be something that we impose on reality; “as facts or putative facts they are available to be thought and expressed whether anyone is thinking about them or not.”²⁶⁹

EE) (1) They [the Stoics] say that a true proposition (*axiōma*) is that which obtains (*ho huparchei*) and is contradictory to something, while a falsehood is that which on the one hand does not obtain but on the other does have a contradictory. (2) And when asked what that which obtains is, they say it is what activates (*kinoun*) the cognitive impression (*kataleptikēn phantasian*). (3) Then when they are examined concerning the cognitive impression, they retreat again into that which obtains, i.e., into what is equally unknown, saying “the cognitive impression is that which has its source in something obtaining (*hē apo huparchontos*) according to what itself obtains (*kat’ auto to huparchon*).”²⁷⁰

We already met the term *huparchein* in connection with time, where I argued that we should translate the term as *what obtains* or *is the case*, as opposed to *what exists*. In connection with true *lekta* it describes the fact that what is said is true, obtains or is the case, and thus marks the difference between the true and false proposition. So much is clear. But the supporter of a mind-independent view of *lekta* will argue that because *huparchein* means *what exists*, it is clear that *lekta* subsist on the world itself. Furthermore, since what obtains is defined here as what *activates* the cognitive impression, there is little room for any other interpretation than that *lekta* are in the world and not in the mind. However, EE3 gives us a clue as to how what obtains can activate the impression and be a quality of the proposition without abandoning all our evidence that *lekta* subsist according to the rational impression.

One might well wonder why there is a double reference to what obtains in the last clause. My suggestion is that in this passage Sextus uses *huparchein* in two senses, the ordinary sense of what exists, as well as the technical sense of what obtains. So what activates the cognitive impression is something existing in the ordinary sense, and the force of describing the world as existing *according to what itself obtains* is to signal that the existing thing that activates the impression is delimited by the true proposition, which is the thing (in the *thing* sense of *pragma*) that properly speaking obtains. Thus the force of *itself* is to signal that what obtains is really the proposition, but it does so and is true because it corresponds to the way the world is. It is admittedly confusing to use *huparchein* to express both thoughts, but Sextus is a hostile commentator and it would not be out of place for him to take advantage of the ordinary sense of the term to cast the Stoic position in an unflattering light. We need not assume that the Stoics themselves referred to existing things as obtaining to appreciate the point Sextus is making. We can read Sextus as giving a true report, albeit one that does not convey things as clearly or charitably as it could.

²⁶⁸ 1966: 70

²⁶⁹ LS (1987: 202)

²⁷⁰ SE, M. 8.85-6 (34D)

The more Stoic way to put the point would be to say that 1) the true proposition is what obtains in the technical Stoic sense of *huparchein*; 2) to the question why the true proposition obtains, the answer is that the material world, which exists, activates the cognitive impression; therefore 3) a cognitive impression has its source in the world, and the resulting proposition is what obtains because its underlying impression had its source in the world. There is thus a discernible slide in Sextus' report from what it is that obtains (the proposition), to what makes it the case that the proposition obtains (the world), to a conflation of the two, which does indeed make the account look circular. But the circle is not vicious.

Let me explain. Again, the proposition obtains (is true) because the material world is a certain way; indeed, we have the cognitive impression according to which the true proposition subsists precisely because the world is that way. But if one wants to know *what* exactly in the world is the source of the cognitive impression, it will be picked out by means of the thing that properly speaking obtains, i.e., the proposition. The reason for this was already in play with the *huparxis* of the *now*: it is the Stoics' continuum physics. Time, we said, is a continuous, infinite whole because the world on which it subsists is a continuous, everlastingly recurring whole. Therefore, properly speaking, only the whole of time is present and obtains. Nonetheless the Stoics can do justice to the common sense intuition that there is something special to what is happening *now*, as long as we can do so in broad or inexact terms. Now, in the case of *lekta*, I wish to repeat that the world is a continuous whole with natural joints; and, if someone wants to press the Stoics for a precise division between head, trunk and limbs, or yesterday, today and tomorrow, there is no non-arbitrary answer because there are no exact divisions in nature. Let's take the case of Cato's walking. His walking is corporeal, and it exists. It is what activates the cognitive impression and makes the resulting proposition "Cato is walking" true. Now, suppose someone asks us to identify the very thing that activates the impression and is the truth-maker of the proposition. In the spirit of head, trunk and limbs the answer is obviously Cato's walking. But suppose someone wants a more precise answer, and would like the Stoics to identify the precise moments that Cato's walking begins and ends, i.e., exact boundaries for the event. For that there is no division in the world, and to that extent the answer can only be given by reference to the proposition, or better: to the objective content of the cognitive impression expressed by the proposition.

What exists (the event of Cato's walking) obtains as a discrete event because the impression has delimited it as such. But this is not the vicious circle Sextus was aiming for. Existence does not depend on the rational impression or the proposition except insofar as we demand exact divisions. If one seeks the precise boundaries of Cato's walking, they are not to be found; but when one is comfortable speaking broadly or inexactly it is beyond doubt that Cato's material walking makes the proposition "Cato is walking" true. If precision is required, only the whole world exists; but that will hardly do as an answer to why this proposition is true. Someone might object that there are clear boundaries to Cato's walking: now he walks, now he doesn't. But *now* is precisely the issue, which is why time and *lekta* are connected by this intriguing technical term (*huparchein*). In a sophistic spirit one can see how it would be difficult to be precise about the beginning and end of a walking episode. Is it when both feet stop moving? When Cato sits? When he stands? What if he is taking a walk but stops for a minute? Does he have to have completed a whole step to have begun walking? If not, when does a step begin? Just as the present is retrenchable, so too is the proposition. In fact, it might be most accurate to say that *what obtains* is what is retrenchable, and that what obtains includes particular times and propositions.

Thus I agree with A.A. Long in spirit when he says: “In Stoic terms, the whole theory may be summed up thus: a statement or *lekton hyparchei* (is the case) if what it describes *hyparchei* (exists) and what is described is true if the statement describing it is true...The *hyparchis* of a *lekton* indicates its truth value, not its ontological status.”²⁷¹ I do not agree, however, that the basic sense of *hyparchis* for the Stoics is *to exist*, except insofar as they recognized it as the everyday sense of the term. More importantly, I don’t agree with the Kneales’ statement, which Long cites approvingly, that “the true proposition has a structure corresponding to a similar structure in the object described.”²⁷² The world is a continuous whole with natural joints, but this falls well short of seeing the world as neatly carved up into facts we can read off it. Of course “Cato is walking” is true because Cato is in fact walking; what could be more plain? But the very same event will support all kinds of propositions. For example, it might also be true that Cato is loping, or strolling, or going to the agora. In that case, the precise portion of the existing world that makes it true that Cato is strolling as opposed to loping (or could it be both?), is imposed by us because we have imposed limits where there aren’t any. But this is not to deny the world’s natural joints, divorce *lekta* from the world, or embrace relativism.

Thus I think Long is too hard on Watson’s view that *lekta* are an imposition on reality by us: “Yet it cannot be correct to say that all *lekta* are impositions on reality by us. The Stoics did not hold such a view when they said ‘It is day’ is true ‘if it is day’, [sic.] ‘It is day’ is a statement which *describes* an empirical situation, not a mental construct.”²⁷³ I have been arguing that “It is day” is absolutely a description of the world, but also that the Stoics’ continuum physics dictates precise boundaries are mental constructs. To recognize this distinction between speaking broadly and speaking exactly, and to say that speaking exactly is a matter of imposing mentally constructed limits, is not at all to say that when we speak of day we are speaking *about* mental constructs. So there is a perfectly innocent sense in which *lekta* can be seen as mental constructs: the sense in which one moves from speaking broadly to speaking exactly, which is just how we found things with time.²⁷⁴ Similarly, just as those who took the *hyparchis* of *now* to indicate a different ontological status from past and future so that time undergoes some bizarre change of ontological status, so too the world view has *lekta* subsisting according to the world when it is true, but not when false. Of course, M. Frede takes this as evidence of the slide from metaphysics to logic, but there is no textual evidence to support such a distinction between true and false *lekta*—all *lekta* are described as subsistent, and true or false (when they’re *axiōmata*).

So how do *lekta* play the role of facts? They do so by being true propositions that subsist according to the rational impression arising from what obtains (*ho hyparchontos*) and having its content exactly in accordance with what obtains,²⁷⁵ where what obtains is delimited by the impression but does not rely for its existence on the impression. There is a similar confusion in modern parlance as between facts in the sense of true propositions or statements and what is the case in the world itself. My point is that the world is not made of facts. When our propositions are true it is because they correspond to the way the world is. No one disputes that the Stoics had a

²⁷¹ 1971: 93

²⁷² Kneales (1962: 153); Long (1971: 94)

²⁷³ 1971: 94

²⁷⁴ Further, it’s not clear how Long can maintain that only some *lekta* are imposed by us but not others (on the assumption that in denying they *all* are constructs he admits that some are). Would he say that *walking* is not imposed by us, but *strolling* is? If so, the view is vulnerable to a Sorites paradox like the parts of time view.

²⁷⁵ DL 7.54 (40A), 7.46 (40C); SE, M. 7.247-52 (40E)

correspondence theory of truth, and there is no need to somehow equate the true proposition with the world, even though both can be described as what is the case, i.e., what obtains. Science is not a game of finding true propositions hovering over the material world, like bobbing for apples or something. Rather, our job as students of nature is to reconstruct the world so that what we say corresponds to how it is. To quote as eminent an authority as there is, Albert Einstein says: “To put it boldly, it [science] is the attempt at the posterior reconstruction of existence by the process of conceptualization.”²⁷⁶

The second kind of evidence levied in favor a world-dependent and thus mind-independent view of *lekta* comes from the Stoics’ treatment of causation.

FF) (1) Zeno says that a cause (*aition*) is that because of which (*ho di’ hou*), and that of which it is the cause is an attribute (*sumbebēkos*); and the cause is a body, while that of which it is the cause is a predicate (*katēgorēma*). (2) He says that it is impossible that the cause be present (*pareinai*), but that of which it is the cause not belong (*mē huparchein*). (3) This thesis has the following force: a cause is that because of which something occurs (*ginetai*), for example it is because of wisdom (*phronēsis*) that being wise (*to phronein*) occurs, because of soul that being alive (*to zēn*) occurs, and because of temperance (*sōphrosunē*) that being temperate (*to sōphronein*) occurs. For it is impossible when someone possesses temperance, for him not to be temperate, or, when he possesses soul, for him not to be alive, or, when he possesses prudence, for him not to be prudent. (4) Chrysippus says that a cause is that because of which, and that the cause is an existent (*on*) and a body (*sōma*), <while that of which it is the cause is neither an existent nor a body>; and that the cause is on the one hand “because” (*hoti*), while that of which it is the cause is “why?” (*dia ti*) (5) He says that an explanation (*aitia*) is the statement of a cause (*aition*), or a statement concerning the cause *as* cause (*peri tou aitiou hōs aition*).²⁷⁷

GG)The Stoics say that every cause (*aition*) is a body, which becomes the cause to a body of something incorporeal (*asōmatou*). For instance the scalpel, a body, becomes the cause to the flesh, a body, of the incorporeal predicate (*katēgorēma*) being cut. And again, the fire, a body, becomes the cause to the wood, a body, of the incorporeal predicate being burnt.²⁷⁸

HH) Hence becoming (*to ginesthai*), and being cut (*to temnesthai*)—that of which there is a cause—since they are activities (*energeiai*), are incorporeal (*asōmatōi*). It can be said, to make the same point, that causes are causes of predicates (*katēgorēmata*), or, as some say, of sayables (*lekta*) (for Cleanthes and Archedemus called predicates sayables). Or else, and preferably, that some are causes of predicates, for example of is cut (*to temnetai*), of which the case (*ptōsis*) is to be cut (*to temnesthai*), but others of propositions (*axiōmata*), for example of a ship is built, whose case this time is a ship’s being built.²⁷⁹

There are three things to track here: the cause, the attribute and the predicate. The cause itself is corporeal, for example the scalpel. The attribute (*sumbebēkos*) is also a body—wisdom, temperance, soul, cutting, and the ship’s being built—these are all bodies qualified or disposed in a certain way. Hence this discussion brings us back to the Stoic categories (substrate, qualified, disposed, and relatively disposed). We saw then that certain commentators take the categories to be

²⁷⁶ 1954: 44; see also 266, 335-337

²⁷⁷ Stob. 1.138, 14-139,4 (55A)

²⁷⁸ SE, M. 9.211 (55B)

²⁷⁹ Clement, *Strom.* 8.9.26.3-4 (55C); see also 8.9.30, 1-3

mental constructs, or *lekta* without any objective denotation.²⁸⁰ It is time to untangle that knot by observing that even if precise boundaries in a continuum physics are mental constructs, there is no reason to assume that what we are talking *about* when we speak of day, or Cato's walking or of someone's flesh being cut is a mental construct. What we are speaking about is straightforwardly corporeal, even if we delimit that portion of the material world by means of something that is not corporeal. The third term in play is the incorporeal predicate, or deficient (incomplete) *lekton*. Advocates of what I have called the world view find here the strongest possible evidence that we should think of *lekta* as mind-independent. I cite Dorothea Frede as an example:

No one seems to have thought that 'what is caused' is therefore only a subjective condition, i.e., that it depends on the eye of the beholder; —this is not at all an anticipation of the argument of noise of the falling tree in the forest. We have to assume that for the Stoics the "being cut" or "being burnt" are quite real phenomena, without anyone conceiving or expressing them. If they are not regarded as beings in the full sense then this is due to their incorporeal nature. So these incomplete λεκτά, although they are called predicates, are clearly not dependent on the human mind of their subsistence!²⁸¹

Frede goes on to support her position by citing that the predicates are often defined as attributes (*sumbebékota*), as they appear to be above. But there is a crucial difference between the attribute itself, which is a body, and the incorporeal predicate. Nonetheless, my opponent will say, it is abundantly clear that insofar as predicates are the effects of corporeal causes, they can hardly be mind-dependent. Effects are not something we make up. My reply is that the attribute itself is a mind-independent body, not to be confused with the predicate—of course the flesh is cut whether anyone thinks about it or not. However, the Stoics' continuum physics dictates that the effect is a natural joint lacking precise boundaries, not a separate entity. Further, any appeal to Stoic realism about causation (which is indeed real in virtue of the corporeal *logos* that infuses the material world) will only serve to emphasize that a literal interpretation of the cause as a body and predicate as distinct incorporeal effect is ill conceived. Watson puts the point as follows: "The real connection between events is the Logos-Pneuma structure. We take this for granted, but, strictly speaking, our statement should bring out the fact that in our ordinary language we are normally imposing a pattern. So we should say 'A is the cause to B of a predicate', separating our contribution or the interpretation we are putting on events."²⁸²

So the fact that the categories of substrate and qualified thing are separable only in thought does not mean that in laying out the categories the Stoics are talking *about* mental constructs; to say so is a conflation of content and object. Thus I disagree with Kahn that *logos*, which is the *arché* of the material world, is itself an incorporeal *lekton*.²⁸³ What we can say about *logos* is *lekton*, but the *logos* itself is not *lekton*. As Stephen Menn rightly points out, one of the central Stoic innovations is precisely the distinction between the corporeal attribute and predicate.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ e.g., Christensen, Rist, Watson

²⁸¹ 1990: 215

²⁸² Watson (1966: 57); on the other hand, he takes the point too far by saying that "what is real is the world process of events. Any other linking up between them, as in causality language, is our construction and incorporeal" (op. cit.: 58)

²⁸³ 1959: 169

²⁸⁴ 1999: 219

The texts I have cited here make it perfectly clear that the result of the cause is another corporeal state, namely the flesh that is cut, the individual who has temperance, etc. which are all attributes of body. But none of these is a distinct effect in any precise billiard ball causation way, as continuum physics dictates. So what does it mean for the Stoics to say that predicates are the effects of causes? Not that causes give rise to predicates hovering above the material world waiting for us to pluck them. Rather, the relation between corporeal cause and incorporeal effect is a truth-maker relation. I hardly need remind the reader that the Greek *aitia* (and *aition*) can be rendered *explanation* as much as *cause*. So, to say that the scalpel is a cause of the incorporeal *to be cut* is to say that the corporeal cause explains why the predicate obtains, i.e., why it's true that the flesh is cut. When we reconstruct the world correctly, because we have reliable impressions from what exists, what we say obtains. But that in no way implies that what exists depends on us for its reality.

Indeed, though Long & Sedley feel the force of the world-dependent view, their translation of FF already reflects my account: “that the cause (*aition*) is on the one hand ‘because’ (*hoti*), while that of which it is the cause is ‘why?’ (*dia ti*) He says that an explanation (*aitia*) is the statement of a cause (*aition*), or a statement concerning the cause *as* cause.” This fits perfectly with what I have been saying about the double sense of obtaining. The corporeal cause obtains in the ordinary sense of existing, which is captured by “because” (*hoti*). The incorporeal predicate obtains in the technical sense of being true or being the case, which is captured by “why?” (*dia ti*); this latter sense explains why the *lekton* is true. And, as we saw before, the *lekton* resulting from the cognitive impression will be true because it has its source in the world and expresses things as they are. In fact, one might argue that *hoti* should be translated “that” rather than “because” insofar as it is a statement describing the corporeal state of things. Hence, we would say: the cause is on the one hand *that* the world has such and such a corporeal attribute (say, a scalpel that is cutting), while that of which it is the cause, the incorporeal predicate that obtains, is the reason why we speak this way. But this is not to make the corporeal attribute dependent on the incorporeal predicate except insofar as we seek precise boundaries. As before, if one wants a precisely delineated cause as a discrete entity one will have to pick it out by means of the predicate or the complete *lekton*, and this is so because there are properly speaking no discrete causes or entities to be had in a continuum physics.

Not only did the Stoics recognize a difference between the attribute and predicate, as corporeal and incorporeal, but predicates and *lekta* must in some way be mind-dependent in order to serve as objects of assent and impulse. Saying this does not commit the Stoics to irrationalism about attributes or to desiring anything other than that the corporeal world be a certain way.

II) (1) They [the Stoics] say that all impulses (*hormas*) are acts of assent (*sunkatatheseis*) and the practical impulses also contain motive power (*praktikas kinêtikon*). (2) But acts of assent and impulses actually differ in their objects (*ep' allo*): propositions (*axiômata*) are objects of assent, but impulses are directed toward predicates (*katégorêmata*), which are contained in a sense in the propositions.²⁸⁵

JJ) (1) They [the Stoics] say that the difference between choiceworthy (*haireton*) and what-should-be-chosen (*haireteon*) also applies to desirable (*orekton*) and what-should-be-wished (*orekteon*), and wishworthy (*boulêton*) and what-should-be-wished (*boulêteon*), and acceptable (*apodekton*) and what-should-be-accepted (*apodekteon*). For goods (*agatha*) are choiceworthy and wishworthy and desirable <and acceptable. But benefactions (*ôphelêmata*) are what should-

²⁸⁵ Stob. 2.88,2-6 (33I)

be-chosen and what-should-be-wished and what-should-be-desired > and what should-be-accepted since they are predicates (*katēgorēmata*) and correlates (*parakeimēna*) of goods. (2) For we choose what-should-be-chosen and wish what-should-be-wished and desire what-should-be-desired. For choices and desires and wishes, just like impulses, are of predicates. (3) Yet we choose and wish and likewise desire to *have* goods, and so goods are choiceworthy and wishworthy and desirable. For we choose to have prudence and moderation, but not, of course, [to *have*] acting prudently and acting moderately, which are incorporeal (*asōmata*) and predicates.²⁸⁶

My point in citing these passages is to show that the Stoic distinction between attribute and predicate is clearly delineated, and does not imply either that the world's attributes are unreal or that predicates are world-dependent (except, of course, inasmuch as the content of our impressions and thus the content of *lekta*, depend on the way the world is, i.e., on what has been impressed). Furthermore, it is essential to Stoic ethics that our objects of assent and impulse be our own, and thus products of the commanding faculty. It is essential because the Stoics were determinists, and their compatibilist account of free will requires that the choice we make be our own, a function of the commanding faculty and nothing else; indeed, this is the only thing over which we have genuine control. This by no means implies that we chase mental constructs rather than corporeal states of being, and herein lies the nub of the issue over *lekta* and the Stoic ontology as a whole.

Commentators who take the categories to be mental constructs have failed to recognize that while it is certainly true that there is no corporeal division to be found between, say, the substrate and the qualified this does not mean that ontological analysis is inherently subjective or that we are talking *about* anything other than the material world when we conduct this analysis. This is the respect in which the word-view interpreters of *lekta* go too far in their subjectivism. But on the other side, the world-view commentators go too far in their realism. I propose a happy medium according to which *lekta* are products of thought that get their objective content from the rational impression whose content is due to the material world that makes its impression on the commanding faculty. The conflation of attribute and predicate is not to be underestimated. Even commentators who claim to favor the mind-dependent view back-peddle on facts and causation, or give an analysis that mixes up the two domains.

For example, A.A. Long offers an interesting analogy to elucidate the nature of *lekta* as mind-dependent: *lekta* are to corporeal acts of thinking as *to phronein* (to be wise, a predicate) is to *phronesis* (wisdom, a corporeal attribute). Long's intention is to show that *lekta* subsist according to the rational impression, inheriting their content from the thoughts they express. However, in so doing, he belies his own position because predicates just are deficient *lekta*, so in crafting this analogy Long unwittingly makes *lekta* both mind-dependent and world-dependent. It cannot be the case that *lekta* relate to acts of thinking the way predicates relate to the world because predicates are a kind of *lekton*, and must therefore have the same account. The fix I have been suggesting is easy enough: the predicate and complete *lekton* alike subsist according to the rational impression; the rational impression gets its content from the material world and its many attributes. So there is an innocent sense in which Watson is right that *lekta* are our contribution to reality, namely the sense in which we craft precise boundaries for the sake of communication and knowledge. But it is certainly not correct to say, as Graeser and others have, that the categories are mental constructs or that logic

²⁸⁶ Stob. 2.97,15-98,6 (33J)

and dialectic are cut off from the world. Nor is it correct to say, with the world view commentators, that *lekta* are in the world independent of thought.

There is in fact a sensible view we can attribute to the Stoics, which does right by the strong textual evidence that *lekta* subsist according to the rational impression, accounts for the subsistence of *lekta* in a manner consistent with the body-less subsistence of the other incorporeals, and shows the Stoics were not incoherent but subtle, modern-minded thinkers concerned to balance objective with subjective. It is not necessary either to render all aspects of Stoic philosophy subjective or to send *lekta* into a Fregean third realm and deny the creative and productive role of the mind in knowledge and communication. What is sayable is the objective content of the rational impression, which can be conveyed in words. Thus I said before that the availability of this content to be expressed is the primary sense in which the *lekta* are sayable, in the passive modal sense. *Qua* content of rational impressions, the *lekta* are already available for saying, whether anyone says them or not. But this is not the sense in which commentators say the *lekta* are available to be said whether they get said or not. I still owe an account of this second way in which *lekta* are sayable independent of being said. In contrast to the Fregean reading, mine will hold that if there were no rational impressions there would be no *lekta*, and to that extent also no eternal truths. But to deny that there are eternal truths independent of human thought is only to deny that there are propositions, not to deny that the world is as it is. The truth-maker itself is an eternal continuous whole that could make true any number of different propositions; this is not to render the world *sayable* so much as available for thought and discourse whether there is any thought and discourse or not.

I will now address how *lekta* can be considered proper objects of thought and discourse, as the Something criterion requires, and eventually how they are sayable in the second way. In effect I have been arguing that the basic notion of the *lekton* subsisting according to the rational impression is the notion of speaker meaning. But it's clear that what we need is a notion of *lekton* that can be shared by hearer and speaker alike, lest we end up with a theory of private language and violate the intersubjectivity requirement described by D. Frede. As Long & Sedley put the point:

The proposition that Cato is walking is the logical or linguistic correlate of my thought, my thought as expressed in a sentence. Only I can have my thoughts, but 'Cato is walking' is something which could fit the impression in any person's mind.²⁸⁷

Passage B, which described the drill sergeant providing himself as a model for the boy, showed that the Stoics recognized objective incorporeal impressors; in that case it was the drill sergeant's pattern of motions that had a nature like that of the incorporeal *lekta* in relation to which the boy was impressed. Thus having a nature like the incorporeal *lekta* means being available for anyone to grasp, not just the one doing the saying. Likewise, passage Z, which described the difference between a barbarian and Greek speaker, makes it clear that the Stoics had in mind what the hearer grasps in conversation. The barbarian hears the sound but does not grasp the *lekton*. Verbeke makes an observation that shows the way to a preliminary answer to how speaker and hearer can share the same meaning: "What is given in experience becomes an object of thought at the moment of translation into words, when it becomes a *lekton*. . . there is thus a perfect parallelism between the capacity to speak and the capacity to think, since sensible content does not accede to the level of thought except when it becomes expressible. . . one moves from the pure sensible image

²⁸⁷ LS (1987: 200-1)

to the structures of language: to words, propositions and reasonings.’²⁸⁸ The idea is that insofar as we are rational animals we are able not only to express our thoughts but to grasp what others have expressed as well. It is a function of reason that we can use words both as speaker and as hearer. For Verbeke language is a kind of sign, and it is essential to human reason that it enables us to go beyond the given by means of signs. In this case, we are able to go beyond the given sound “Cato is walking” to what is said. Thus one can say that because language is significant it is available for anyone to understand. Recall that the *lekton* is the semantic thing (*pragma*); part of the reason for pragmatizing (so to speak) the *lekton* is to indicate its objective availability for thought. The ability of the commanding faculty to express the *lekton* is the same as the ability to receive and grasp meaning, the *proprium quiddam* of the movements of thought.

This leads us to what the Stoics call *metabasis*, typically translated *transition*. This term, from the verb *metabainô*, means literally a *passing over, shifting or changing*. Thus in the case of apprehending *lekta* we pass over from the sound to the meaning it expresses. For Verbeke *metabasis* is the ability to go beyond the given to what is not and may never be available to the senses;²⁸⁹ A.A. Long describes *metabasis* as the ability to make inferences;²⁹⁰ and Long & Sedley say *metabasis* refers to “the mind’s ability to abstract, e.g., the idea of place from particular bodies.”²⁹¹ There is not much evidence concerning this interesting mental operation, so I will quote the relevant passage in full to give us enough context to work with.

KK(1) It is by confrontation (*kata periptôsin*) that we come to think of (*enoéthê*) sense-objects (*aisthêta*). (2) By similarity (*kath’ homoiotêta*) things on the basis of something related (*tinou parakeimenou*), like Socrates on the basis of a picture. (3) By analogy (*kat’ analogian*), sometimes by magnification (*auxêtikôs*), as in the case of Tityos and Cyclopes, sometimes by diminution (*meiôtikôs*), as in the case of the Pygmy; also the idea of the center of the earth arose by analogy on the basis of smaller spheres. (4) By transposition (*kata metathesin*), things like eyes on the chest. (5) By combination (*kata sunthesin*), Hippocentaur. (6) By opposition (*kat’ enantiôsin*), death. (7) Some things are also conceived by transition (*kata metabasin*), such as sayables (*lekta*) and place (*topos*). (8) The idea of something just and good is acquired naturally. (9) That of being without hands, for instance, by privation (*sterêsin*).²⁹²

One thing that is not immediately clear is whether *metabasis* is what goes on in creating the *lekta* or just in apprehending them when expressed by others. I am inclined to say that it is reserved for the apprehension of *lekta* because, as Long & Sedley say:

In the mature human being all impressions are “rational” or “thought processes” (39A6), and all conceptions are themselves “a kind of impression” (39F). This suggests that all impressions of mature human beings are envisages to have propositional content, and that we assent to impressions by assenting to their corresponding *lekta* or propositions, which are the proper objects of assent.²⁹³

²⁸⁸ 1978: 264-5

²⁸⁹ op. cit., p. 280

²⁹⁰ 1971: 88

²⁹¹ 1987: 241

²⁹² DL 7.53 (39D)

²⁹³ LS (1987: 240)

Thus for the content of the rational impression to be available for expression is part of what it is to be a rational impression, and not a further mental operation like those described by Diogenes above. “So understood, rational impressions of the external world will not imply a theory that the mind receives raw data which it subsequently interprets. Rather, we should take it that rational impressions themselves represent their objects in ways that presuppose language and concepts.”²⁹⁴ Thus I take it that *metabasis* answers the call for an account of hearer meaning, but that as a function of rationality it is not different in kind from the speaker’s ability to utter. It is, however, different in that it is the mind’s ability to be impressed in relation to something incorporeal, and to that extent distinct from the regular operations of the rational impression. *Lekta* can be shared by speaker and hearer because as rational animals we are equipped to express and to be impressed in relation to such things; expressing and understanding *lekta* are two sides of the same rational coin.

I take, then, it to be established that the Stoics thought of *lekta* as sufficiently objective to be proper objects of thought and discourse as the Something criterion requires. One might still wish to know in what their objectivity consists. To this I offer again the observation that the content expressed in words, i.e., the semantic thing (*pragma*) itself, is due to the underlying impression that makes the *lekta* incorporeal like place, room, void, surface, and time. Now, the Stoics were empiricists; they took it that we are born a *tabula rasa*, and that our interactions with the world give us our concepts and indeed our very rationality, which is constituted by those concepts. So when I say that the content of *lekta* is grounded in the content of our rational impressions, the objectivity comes for free, so to speak. This does not preclude us from expressing plenty of false *lekta*. The point is rather that the conceptual tools with which we think come from the world itself. Thus the objective content of the thoughts we express by *lekta* is guaranteed by our interactions with the corporeal world and its natural joints, and by our immersion in linguistic practice.

A more detailed account of the matter would require an in-depth analysis of Stoic rationality, which I cannot undertake here. But I take the basic tools to have been given: we acquire our concepts through sense perception and linguistic practice; we express our thoughts by vocalizing them in words; we understand these vocalizations through *metabasis*. If one should ask, in turn, for an account of how words get their meaning, this too is beyond my scope. I think there are interesting questions as to whether the Stoics are pure empiricists, whether the notion of rational preconceptions (*prolēpseis*) shows they had a certain rationalism in play as well, and whether we should think of the mental content that gets expressed along the lines of contemporary internalist or externalist semantic theories. These questions are beside the current point, however, in that I have undertaken to show how the *lekta* can be considered body-less like their incorporeal cousins, mind-dependent and yet objective as a piece of metaphysics. These three desiderata are met by appeal to the *lekton* subsisting according to the rational impression.

It remains for me to establish the particularity of *lekta* according to the Not-Someone test. In the other cases, the particularity of the incorporeal was due to the particularity of the underlying body. So it will be in this case as well, though we will be operating in the semantic dimension rather than in terms of three-dimensionality or temporal extension. When I see Cato walking and I say “Cato is walking” the full content must be understood as Cato (this one here) is walking here and now; it is fully particular in being indexed to the time and place of utterance. To borrow Denyer’s way of speaking, they are token-reflexive and to this extent unlike Fregean senses, which are eternal

²⁹⁴ loc. cit.; whether the *lekta* are inherently linguistic or not is another contentious matter I cannot adjudicate here

or rather timeless.²⁹⁵ Recall that the definite proposition is deictic; the subject is given by demonstrative reference. And when an indefinite or intermediate proposition is true it is so because the deictic one is true: “someone is walking” and even “Cato is walking” are true if and only if “this one is walking” is true.²⁹⁶ So, in the debate over whether to take the *lekton* as a saying rather than a sayable, I maintain that the fundamental sense of the *lekton* is what is said, a saying.²⁹⁷ With Watson, we must remember that the Stoics “always insisted on the distinction of statements made at different instants even though these statements were so very similar that for all practical purposes they were regarded as the same.”²⁹⁸ In arguing against the Kneales, A.A. Long says: “*Lekta* are defined in terms of language and presentations [*phantasiai*] and this points to their temporal dependence on the duration of thoughts and sentences. *Lekta* do not denote a world of propositions but the content of thought and significant discourse.”²⁹⁹ Though I am not sure we want to say that the *lekton* expires as soon as I stop making sound, I certainly think that the content of the *lekton* depends on the impression it expresses, and the particularity of that content is inherited by the *lekton*.

So, arriving at the Not-Someone test: if “It is raining” is uttered in Athens, its content will not be the same as “It is raining” uttered in Megara; the *lekton* expressing an impression in Athens cannot be expressing an impression in Megara. Because this comes out true, we can see that the token *lekton* is particular as required by the Something criterion. Further, only token utterances will be eligible for a truth value, and since *lekta* are defined as the bearers of truth and falsity, the basic notion must therefore be utterance-specific. Though I may be able to understand the meaning of “It is raining” when it is mentioned rather than used, there will be no truth value attached to the mentioned *lekton*. What about a statement like “Cato is walking” uttered in Athens and Megara? In this case I am inclined to say that the objective content of the utterances is the same, so long as both are uttered at the same time, both intend the same Cato walking in the same place, and neither is in a position to make deictic reference; in that case there is a sense in which the same *lekton* will have been uttered because the fully particular truth conditions are the same. On the other hand, with Watson, it may be better to say that these are two *lekta* so similar as to be virtually identical. Certainly they are different tokens, so the question whether they are same *lekton* rather than exactly similar will depend on whether the Stoics in some sense accept *lekta* as types. If they do, that would answer to the passive modal sense in which the *lekta* are sayable independent of any sayings. I have indicated that this question remains outstanding and carefully (if not artfully) avoided addressing the matter directly.

In fact, I think the Stoics do have a means of countenancing the sayable independent of sayings. It will be the same sense that allows mention of a *lekton* and an understanding of its lexical meaning even when its content is not particular enough to have reference or truth value. The fact that the Stoics were live to ambiguity shows that they could consider meanings apart from their particular uses, i.e., they could say of “bank” that it might mean the edge of a river or a place to keep money. It is words that are ambiguous for the Stoics, not the *lekta* themselves; but the idea that we might canvas potential meanings show they did operate in terms of mention as well as use. Further,

²⁹⁵ “Stoicism and Token Reflexivity,” in Jonathan Barnes and Mario Mignucci (eds.) *Matter and metaphysics, Fourth Symposium Hellenisticum*, Bibliopolis (1988), pp. 375-396; note that Denyer takes tense not to be token-reflexive because he thinks that the present time is ontologically privileged; I disagree on both counts.

²⁹⁶ See Kahn, who complains that this aspect of Stoic thought is underappreciated (1959: 159-161)

²⁹⁷ On this see Imbert (1978: 102); Barnes (1999: 211); Bréhier (1928: 22 ff., 96); Graeser (1978: 87-90)

²⁹⁸ 1966: 72

²⁹⁹ 1971: 97

the Stoics are famous for recognizing propositions that change their truth value (the *metapiptonta*), and the only way that could be is for them to recognize meaning independent of use. In what, then, does this *sayable* consist and how does it get to be Something? I will have to postpone an answer until after I introduce the third ontological category, what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal; but I can forecast that *lekta* considered as lexical meanings available for use (and for mention) whether anyone is now uttering them or not will be a function of the token sayings that are fully particular in their content. The *sayable* in the sense of lexical meaning will be neither true nor false, yet still objective and particular enough to count as Something; more on this at the end of Chapter IV.

For now, then, let me summarize my results on the *lekta* by returning to the desiderata I cited from Dorothea Frede. 1) The Stoic ontology is by no means the crass physical realism of Plato's Giants, nor are they merely akratic Giants in positing *lekta* in a third realm outside space and time (as Frede and others have supposed). 2) We can go beyond what we have literally experienced ourselves through *metabasis*, which allows us to go beyond the given, make inferences and grasp incorporeals by reason itself. 3) Our statements have a particular content that is abstractable (again, by *metabasis*) from what is corporeally given, i.e., the words themselves. 4) We are not trapped in private language, I talking about my impressions and you about yours, because what we talk about is the world itself; further, what enables the speaker to say something also enables the hearer to grasp it; so intersubjectivity is accounted for as well. These desiderata have been met within the principles of Stoic ontology that I introduced: the *lekta* are body-less in a manner consistent with the other incorporeals, and they are objective particulars as required by the Something criterion. Therefore we need not take the *lekta* as the undoing of Stoic physicalism or as testament to a subjectivist ontology; on the contrary, they mark yet another respect in which the Stoics were expanding the boundaries of physicalism in a principled and coherent manner.

III.4 Incorporeal Subsistence Summarized

My objective in this chapter was to show that the canonical incorporeals—place, void, time, and *lekta*—all subsist according to a common principle, namely being body-less; and that they all meet the Something criterion for objective particulars. Being body-less is no *ad hoc* label slapped on to entities that don't fit the corporeal mold but aren't dispensable either. Rather it's a matter of depending on body such that the resulting incorporeal, though immaterial, can still be considered physical. The physicality of place, room and void lies in their being three-dimensional, non-solid extension. Time is not three-dimensional but it is characterized as extended, and therefore can rightly be considered physical. The *lekton* is not extended, but it does depend on the rational impression, which is a body, and therefore can be characterized as the semantic dimension of the physical world. In all cases, if there were no bodies, there would be no incorporeals. Thus we can see that none of the incorporeals poses a threat to the Stoic commitment to bodies as the only independently existing entities. Furthermore, we can see that incorporeals are not products of thought or mental constructs—with the important exception of the *lekton*, which is a product of thought because the body on which it subsists (the rational impression) is a thought. But the mind-dependence of the *lekton* is not contagious to the other incorporeal, because its mind-dependence is a function of its being body-less. Incorporeal subsistence according to body (*kath' hupostasis* as I call

it)³⁰⁰ is thus neither subjective, nor Kantian nor Meinongian in spirit. On the contrary, the Stoics were physical realists about their entities, and when we lead with the ontological principles it is apparent that each incorporeal has earned its place by being an objective particular: a proper object of thought and discourse that passes the Not-Someone test.

³⁰⁰ As I said before, this phrase is artificial to the extent that there is talk of *hupostasis*, and even of what is *kath' hupostasis* (passage LL below), but no text says the incorporeal *huphestanai kata sôma*. Nonetheless, since their dependence on body and subsistence are both clear, and I need a way to differentiate the subsistence of incorporeals from that of what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, I have helped myself to the phrase *subsistence according to body*, which I render *kath' hupostasis*.

IV

Neither Corporeal nor Incorporeal: Subsistence According to Thought

I will now argue that in addition to the incorporeals subsisting according to body, the Stoics also recognized entities that are neither corporeal nor incorporeal, which subsist according to thought (*kat' epinoian*). Long & Sedley have made the controversial suggestion that the Stoics had a tripartite ontology, so that the division into bodies and incorporeals is not comprehensive after all.³⁰¹ However, little has been said about the category, except that it includes mathematical limits, like surface, line and point; and figments, like Centaurs and Giants. I will show that the Stoics were live to a previously unnoticed distinction between subsistence according to body and subsistence according to thought, which underwrites the tripartite ontology. Unlike the incorporeals, what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal is a product of thought through and through, subsisting only according to thought—there are no material Centaurs and Giants to which these figments correspond, just as there are no perfect triangles, lines or points. Such entities still count as physical because the thoughts on which they depend are corporeal and, as with the *lekta*, if there were no bodies there would be no figments or limits. There would be nothing at all. If I am right about the principle of what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, most of the fodder for the category of Not-Somethings (*outina*) between Something and nothing at all finds a natural place in the ontology, and a coherent (if unusual) physicalism emerges.

IV.1 Limits

I will begin with limits because they are the most vexed issue and provide the clearest evidence of subsistence according to thought, or *kat' epinoian*.

LL) A surface (*epiphaneia*) is the limit (*peras*) of a body, or that which has only length (*mēkos*) and breadth (*platos*) without depth (*bathos d' ou*). This Posidonius in his *On celestial phenomena* book 5 retains both in thought and as subsistent (*kat' epinoian kai kath' hupostasin*). A line (*grammē*) is the limit of a surface, or length without breadth, or what has length alone. A point (*stigmē*) is the limit of a line – the smallest marker (*sēmeion elachiston*).³⁰²

The subsistence of surface as incorporeal, *kath' hupostasin*, is due to the body of which it is the limit; as I suggested in the last chapter, the Stoics may have been working with an open-ended list of incorporeals that included room and surface in addition to the canonical four. Incorporeal surface defined as length and breadth without depth is straightforwardly two-dimensional body-less extension. That a body has determinate boundaries is a natural joint of the corporeal world due to the internal tension of the object³⁰³ from which incorporeal surface inherits its extension, which makes it both objective and particular. So when Diogenes reports that Posidonius retained surface

³⁰¹ 1987: chapter 27

³⁰² DL 7.135 (50E)

³⁰³ It is well established that bodies are unified and limited from the inside out by the internal tension or tenor of *pneuma* and therefore that limits do not contain or otherwise actively limit bodies, though of course hostile commentators have not failed to hold that against the Stoics.

both in thought (*kat' epinoian*) and as subsistent (*kath' hupostasin*)³⁰⁴ we can say that surface considered, say, as the edge of my kitchen counter is indeed an incorporeal that subsists according to underlying body. Surface according to thought, on the other hand, is an idealized entity that does not correspond to any body—there is no material plane surface of the kind postulated in geometry. Thus the question whether limits are corporeal or incorporeal does not arise the way it would for something like the edge of my countertop, of which we can ask whether it is corporeal or incorporeal.³⁰⁵ So Diogenes' report that Posidonius countenanced surface both ways is not an indication that he was conflicted about whether to say surface was incorporeal (*kath' hupostasin*) or according to thought (*kat' epinoian*), but that there is a systematic ambiguity to the term *surface*. The lesson is that the Stoics have two distinct phenomena in play: surface subsisting according to body (incorporeal) and surface considered as a mathematical construct (neither corporeal nor incorporeal).

If the Stoics did recognize the distinction, it would be easy enough to misunderstand or misrepresent their views as Proclus (a staunch Platonist) does in the following famously recalcitrant passage:

MM)...we should not hold that such limits (*ta toianta perata*), I mean those of bodies, subsist in mere thought (*kat' epinoian psilên huphestanaî*), as the Stoics supposed.³⁰⁶

Now, the best criticism is a true observation presented in a negative light; so polemical testimony about the Stoics should not be written off as unreliable but diagnosed for the elements of truth that license the criticism, as well as the critical bias or omission that makes the result uncharitable. In this case, Proclus is not wrong in noting the reality of limits *kat' epinoian* but not accurate either in leaving out their reality *kath' hupostasin* and conflating the two. Bending the truth is an age-old practice. That the Stoics were on to this distinction between subsistence according to body and according to thought can also be seen in the testimony and puzzles concerning continuum. As we have already seen in passage W,³⁰⁷ the Stoics make reality divisible to infinity without consisting of infinitely many bodies. While such a thesis makes an easy target for ridicule, it is not inherently incoherent because of the distinction between reality *kath' hupostasin* and *kat' epinoian*, as Plutarch himself betrays in his attack on Chrysippus for recognizing head, trunk and limbs but not ultimate parts (passage X).

Considered as a material whole, the world has no proper or ultimate parts.³⁰⁸ And this is perfectly compatible with a strong realism about the world's natural joints, like head, trunk and limbs. According to thought, however, the world can be divided into infinitely many parts; there is no limit to the distinctions we can apply. Long & Sedley: "there are only as many dividing points on a runner's journey as anyone may choose to mark off in thought. At some point our mental power to mark further divisions will fail us, and we will be left with an undivided, although divisible, portion of distance."³⁰⁹ Chrysippus rejects the question about our ultimate parts because, although

³⁰⁴ I thank Ada Bronowski for the suggestion that this locution may be better considered a hendiadyn with an exegetical *kat* rather than a *both...and* thought. I find no translation or commentary that takes it this way, and while it may be a common middle-Platonist way of putting things I take Diogenes to be reliable. If the source had been Stoicizing or even a hostile Platonist I would be more concerned about this alternate reading.

³⁰⁵ As Long & Sedley also note (1987: 165, 301-2)

³⁰⁶ Proc., *In. Encl. El.* I 89,15-21 (50D)

³⁰⁷ See also DL 7.150-1 (50B)

³⁰⁸ Plut., *St. rep.* 1054E-1055A (29D); Philo, *Quaest.* 2.4 (47R)

³⁰⁹ 1987: 303-4; see also Inwood: "what is possible is that the process of division (*tome*) is unceasing, goes on for as long as one cares to do so" (1991: 256); and Andreas Graeser (1978: 80)

what is *kat' epinoian* is made true by what is *kath' hypostasin*, it is not in virtue of a one–one correspondence of parts. It may be true that it is 70 degrees Fahrenheit in the room, but not because there are 70 Fahrenheits making it so. Nonetheless, the fact that it is 70 degrees (which is *kat' epinoian*) is true because of the brute temperature *kath' hypostasin*, which is indifferent to thought. “There is no non-arbitrary answer to the question how many parts [something] has.”³¹⁰

Someone might object that a few passages concerning surface and continuum are hardly sufficient to establish a systematic distinction in Stoic doctrine. Surface is not even a canonical incorporeal. In fact, it is characterized as a limit, and limits are a troubled category that many scholars take as evidence that the Stoics countenance Not-Somethings between Something and nothing at all. The first response to this objection is that the canon is not exclusive. In fact, one would expect to find variations in the list of incorporeals if the Something criterion is indeed prior to its species, as Brunschwig points out. Ironically, Brunschwig finds no such variation, dismissing passages from Cleomedes, Diogenes and Stobaeus to argue against a result he would welcome, namely that the Stoics operated with an open list of incorporeals.³¹¹ But the passages Brunschwig dismisses provide perfectly good evidence of variations on the theme of incorporeality. To wit:

NN)Cleomedes, considering whether an incorporeal could be the limit of void, wonders what incorporeal it would be: “time, surface or something else like them?”³¹²

Brunschwig assumes Cleomedes has listed surface instead of place and takes it that even if not, the open-ended “something else like them” must refer to other canonical incorporeals or Seneca’s figments.³¹³ But these assumptions are unfounded; “something else like them” could just as well refer to their common mode of reality as incorporeals, and not some pre-established list.

OO)They [the Stoics] divide physics (*ton phusikon logon*) into the following five topics: (i) bodies (*peri somatôn*), (ii) principles (*peri archôn*), (iii) elements (*peri stoicheiôn*), (iv) gods (*peri theôn*), (v) limits, place and void (*peri peratôn, topous, kenou*). But they make a generic (*genikôs*) division into three topics: (i) the world (*peri kosmou*), (ii) the elements (*peri stoicheiôn*), (iii) enquiry into causes (*ton aitiologikon*).³¹⁴

Brunschwig finds no implication of a common ontological status among the group,³¹⁵ but why not? What limits, place and void have in common *qua* topic in the study of nature is precisely their subsistence according to body.³¹⁶ Consider again passage W, which tells us that bodies and things comparable (*proseoiikota*) to bodies—surface, line, place, void, and time—are divisible to infinity. Clearly the things comparable to bodies are incorporeal, which is already good evidence for an open-ended list. We saw this kind of talk before in the case of the drill sergeant (passage B); we saw there that the pattern of the drill sergeant’s motions has a reality *like* that of the *lekta*, i.e., objectively subsistent. The pattern is the body-less object of thought subsisting on the token motions of his

³¹⁰ LS (1987: 303); see also p. 178 regarding the perfection of the world itself vs. the imperfection of its parts *qua* dependent for their characterization to extrinsic relations

³¹¹ 1988: 28-9

³¹² *De mot. circul.* 16,2-5

³¹³ 1988: 29; for Seneca’s figments see passage SS below

³¹⁴ DL 7.132 (43B)

³¹⁵ loc. cit.

³¹⁶ The more interesting question would be why we don’t see time or *lekta* on the list. One possible reply would be that time is included as the limit of motion, and *lekta* are not strictly speaking part of the account of nature, though they are a natural phenomenon. If so, this would be further fodder for *lekta* as mind-dependent and against the world view.

body. The fact that the pattern is described as having a nature like that of the *lekta* indicates that the Stoics were prepared to recognize incorporeality throughout the physical world—they identified a distinctive mode of intelligible reality dependent on body, not a finite list. But the canon of incorporeals is still perfectly legitimate insofar as there is a core set of cases; that the Stoics might have tacked on an *et cetera* at the end of the list does not diminish the canon.

As David Robertson points out, we may only have evidence of what later was viewed as the Stoic position, which may be a simplification over time either in the doxographical tradition or within the school. I would say the simplification is a function of commentators rather than internal debate within the school, though I do think that precisely *which* incorporeals make it on the list is the sort of thing over which there was internal debate—as opposed to Robertson’s conjecture that “differences on central metaphysical issues, especially among the revered Founding Fathers of the school, would have been swept under the carpet.”³¹⁷ I think, on the contrary, if there had been foundational debates, they would have been highlighted by hostile commentators. So the fact that surface is not a canonical incorporeal does not bar the extension of Diogenes’ testimony on surface as both *kath’ hupostasin* and *kath’ epinoian* to incorporeals generally.

Plutarch gives further evidence that there was a systematic distinction between incorporeal surface and surface subsisting according to thought, though he does not see it that way of course. This passage is a continuation of the head, trunk and limbs passage (X).

PP) (1) On top of that, he has the puerility to say that, given that the pyramid is compounded (*sumistamenēs*) out of triangles, their sides, where they are adjacent as they incline apart, are unequal, yet do not exceed in so far as they are larger. That’s how he preserved our conceptions! For if something is larger which does not exceed, there will be something smaller which does not fall short. Hence there will be something unequal which neither exceeds nor falls short. That is, the unequal will be equal, the larger not larger, and the smaller not smaller. (2) Again, look how he countered Democritus, who in the vivid manner of a natural philosopher raised the following puzzle. If a cone were cut along a plane parallel to its base, what should we hold the surfaces of the segments to be, equal or unequal? For if they are unequal they will make the cone uneven, with many step-like indentations and rough edges. But if they are equal, the segments will be equal and the cone will turn out to have the properties of a cylinder, through consisting of equal, not unequal, circles, which is quite absurd. Well here Chrysippus declares Democritus to be ignorant and says that the surfaces are neither equal nor unequal, while the bodies, thanks to their surfaces’ being neither equal nor unequal, are unequal... (3) But the limit is not a body. So body will touch body with something incorporeal, and again will not touch, since something incorporeal is in between. But if it will touch, the body will both act and be acted upon by something incorporeal.³¹⁸

The surfaces considered according to the thought experiment will be neither corporeal nor incorporeal, neither equal nor unequal because the question does not arise for something that is a mathematical thought construct (there aren’t really two corporeal or incorporeal surfaces). If, however, you take a material cone and slice it in half, the question does indeed make sense and the surfaces will be unequal. There is no contradiction or paradox here as Plutarch would have it, once we keep the different phenomena in focus: a material cone of which we can ask whether the surfaces are corporeal or incorporeal, equal or unequal, versus an idealized cone and its surfaces that are neither. That both can be called cones and surfaces does not induce paradox in a tripartite

³¹⁷ 2004: 171-2

³¹⁸ Plut., *Comm. not.*, 1078E-1080E (50C4-8)

ontology.³¹⁹ Again, it's a matter of distinguishing the phenomena. Just as with the proper Swiss cheese holes and extra-cosmic void, surface and mathematical limits are two different phenomena, even though surface is a sort of limit and limit a sort of surface. It is, of course, precisely on this ambiguity that critics' paradoxes trade.

With the phenomena properly in focus, what some scholars take to be conflicting passages can be explained so that the available evidence is coherent and consistent. For example, Anna Ju takes the following set of passages to be incompatible.³²⁰

- Diogenes' report that the Stoics retained surface both in thought and as subsistent (passage LL)
- Proclus' report that the limits of bodies subsist in mere thought (passage MM)
- Plutarch's treatment of the limit between two bodies as incorporeal (passage PP3)

QQ) Nor, on the other hand, does the doctrine of the Stoics agree with Aristotle's doctrine about shapes (*ta schēmata*), when they say that shapes too, like other qualified things (*ta alla poia*), are bodies.³²¹

RR) Thus, if the extra-cosmic void is limited, and at all events enclosed by the agency of something, yet not enclosed by the agency of body, it will be enclosed by the agency of an incorporeal (*hupo asōmatou*). So what will this be? Time? Surface? A sayable? Something else like them?³²²

I suppose at first blush this testimony does make the Stoics look hopelessly confused; limits are called everything from bodies to mere thoughts. But it need not. Considered the right way, these passages are quite compatible—without rendering Stoic doctrine incoherent or dismissing any of the testimony. There is a sense in which shapes are bodies for the Stoics, as Simplicius reports (QQ). “This is a globe,” I say, handing a child a model of the earth. The globe shape is in this case perfectly corporeal, as shape that has not had its material element abstracted—body-full shape, if you will. There is also a sense in which the limits of bodies (their shapes) do subsist in (mere) thought (MM). For example, when we describe the moon as round or spherical or some other term we might coin (say, to capture differences in the smoothness of the surface), the reality of the description is *kat' epinoian*, though what we talk about is corporeal. Also in the background is the notion of a mathematical limit, which is purely *kat' epinoian*. So Proclus puts the point contentiously but not inaccurately when he says that the limits of bodies subsist in mere thought. He exploits the semantic ambiguity between limit *qua* limit of a body, which is incorporeal, and limit *qua* mathematical limits whose reality is *kat' epinoian*.

Diogenes (LL) makes the distinction between surface *kat' epinoian* and *kath' hypostasin* explicit; since other passages exploit the distinction, this testimony is not just compatible with, but explanatory of the others. Also, as a neutral commentator, Diogenes is more likely to report the Stoic view accurately. Finally, in describing surface and limit as incorporeal, Plutarch and Cleomedes

³¹⁹ Hence I agree with Robertson's solution of the cone puzzle, but take him to have gone awry in denying any reality to the mathematical surface; the very solution he advocates, which turns on a distinction between incorporeal and ideal surfaces, requires the tripartite ontology in order to have tooth.

³²⁰ 2009

³²¹ Simpl., *In Ar. Cat.*, 271,20-2 (28K)

³²² Cleom., *De motu* 1.1.139-44

capture reality *kath' hupostasin*. Plutarch, in a fit of paradox mongering (PP3), says that bodies touch by means of a limit, then equivocates between incorporeal limit *kath' hupostasin* and limit *kat' epinoian* to imply that the Stoics posited tiny little limits between bodies, on a par with positing 70 Fahrenheits if it's 70 degrees. Bodies don't touch incorporeals; they touch bodies. Incorporeals, as such, don't touch anything, since that would be to act or undergo, which only bodies can do. The sense in which surface is genuinely incorporeal, as Cleomedes reports (RR), has been well rehearsed by now: *qua* limit of a body, it is body-less and has reality *kath' hupostasin*. But this phenomenon is not to be confused with mathematical limits, which are neither corporeal nor incorporeal.

So there is no barrier to taking Diogenes' report on Posidonius at face value. Not only is there no barrier, the distinction explains previously recalcitrant texts, makes our scarce evidence coherent, and squeezes the most out of polemical texts whose narrators are not so much unreliable as uncharitable. My objective in this section was to argue that the Stoics recognized subsistence according to thought (*kat' epinoian*) in addition to subsistence according to body (*kath' hupostasin*), and to show that the distinction dissolves long-standing puzzles about limits. I will return in section IV.3 to address how what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal can be proper objects of thought and discourse, and particulars passing the Not-Someone test.

IV.2 Figments

I turn now to figments, and a crucial passage from Seneca that has been conspicuously absent so far.

SS) The Stoics want to place above this [the existent (*quod est*)] yet another, more primary genus...some Stoics see "Something" as the primary genus; and I will suggest why they see it so. In the world's nature (*in rerum natura*), they say, some things exist (*quaedam sunt*) and some things do not exist (*quaedam non sunt*). However nature includes even those things that do not exist (*quae non sunt*), things that enter the mind (*animo succurrunt*), such as Centaurs, Giants and whatever else falsely formed by thought (*quicquid aliud falso cogitatione formatum*) takes on some image (*habere aliquam imaginem coepit*), despite not having substance (*quamvis non habeat substantiam*).³²³

First, I will make some preliminary remarks about the reliability of this text as a source of Stoic doctrine. There are two reasons one might worry about Seneca's report: he might be Senecizing Stoic doctrine, i.e., he might be modifying main-stream doctrine to suit his own views, or he might be presenting their views polemically. Indeed, the context of the passage makes clear that he is distancing himself from the Stoics and, most problematically, where we would expect Seneca to cite the canonical incorporeals he gives instead mythological creatures. Accordingly, Brad Inwood has analyzed this passage as unreliable testimony.³²⁴ While Inwood is certainly right that Seneca thinks his own highest genus (*quod est*) is correct and that the testimony about Stoic ontology is meant to support *quod est* as the highest genus, it does not make Seneca's testimony suspect. On the contrary, perhaps: it's when Seneca Stoicizes that one should worry about the testimony, since the doctrine may be adopted and adapted (as he does in classing incorporeals under *quod est*) rather than

³²³ Seneca, *Ep.* 58.13, 15 (27A)

³²⁴ 2007: 120-123

merely reported. In this case, however, he is clearly distancing himself from the Stoics and thus we should take Seneca's testimony as an expert in Stoic doctrine at face value. Worries about polemical testimony are neutralized by the fact that Seneca would presumably not wish to harm his reputation as an expert in Stoic doctrine by giving false testimony, especially when arguing against them.

The central puzzle with this text is that where one would expect Seneca to tell us about the canonical incorporeals he tells instead of Centaurs and Giants. We can certainly expect him to have known about the incorporeals, which is why it's puzzling that he uses figments to illustrate the category of non-existent Something. Here too Inwood is right that Seneca does so because he takes himself to have the incorporeals covered under *quod est*, and figments of the imagination are just the sort of entity to make the Stoics' higher genus, Something, look otiose. Thus Inwood is also right that this passage is not particularly useful "for the reconstruction of *other* Stoic...theories" like that of the incorporeals or that only bodies can 'be'.³²⁵

But this does not disqualify the passage in regards to what it *does* tell us, as Inwood suggests in saying that the "value of this short section [15] as a source for Stoic metaphysical theories is questionable."³²⁶ The fact that Seneca doesn't cite the canonical incorporeals as non-existent Somethings doesn't count against "the text as a reliable source for mainstream Stoic theories" if we think that the Stoics countenance more than one kind of non-existent entity, i.e. if we take them to have operated with a tripartite ontology. Admittedly this is a chicken-or-egg scenario insofar as we take this passage as evidence that the Stoics did recognize a third category of Something. However, Seneca's is not the only evidence we have for attributing to the Stoics a tripartite ontology (viz. testimony regarding limits); further, the coherence of *Epistle* 58 and, indeed, the ontology as a whole, that emerges when we take Seneca's testimony about figments at face value is strong support for a tripartite Stoic ontology. Therefore I do not agree with Inwood that in mainstream Stoic theory "what is not" *just is* "the incorporeal"³²⁷ and I will proceed under the assumption that the testimony Seneca gives is reliable.

Now, Long & Sedley take the letter as evidence that in addition to incorporeals, figments are also non-existent Somethings for the Stoics.³²⁸ Others take it as evidence that the Stoics countenance *outina* as non-subsistent entities,³²⁹ either by saying Seneca made a mistake in his list³³⁰ or by tendentious translation. For example, Anna Ju argues (with David Sedley) that we should read the passage as saying that nature includes even those things like Centaurs and Giants that lack *subsistence*, thereby showing the Stoics countenanced non-subsistent Somethings. And Rist argues we should take it to show that nature includes whatever else can be constructed by the mind but lacks *reality*.³³¹ But *substantia* is properly translated *substance* and corresponds to the Greek *ousia*, thereby implying corporeal existence³³²—not some derivative subsistence.³³³ The problem is that Ju

³²⁵ op. cit.: 123, my italics

³²⁶ op. cit.: 120

³²⁷ op. cit.: 122

³²⁸ 1987: 164; also Rist (1971)

³²⁹ For example, Ju (2009); Pasquino (1978); Sedley (2005); D. Frede (1990)

³³⁰ As Pasquino says, endorsing Hadot

³³¹ 1971: 39

³³² Proc., *In Plat. Tim.* 138E (SVF 2.533)

³³³ I also disagree that *quaedam sunt* corresponds to *tina huparchei*, though they are closely related concepts for the Stoics. The Latin *quaedam sunt* corresponds to the Greek *to on*, what exists. Again, we can see how tangles the threads are, in this case with *huparxis*

misaligns subsistence with existence, and divides Something into the subsistent and the non-subsistent; the subsistent then divides into the existent, i.e., corporeals, and the merely subsistent, i.e., incorporeals, as in Fig. 1.

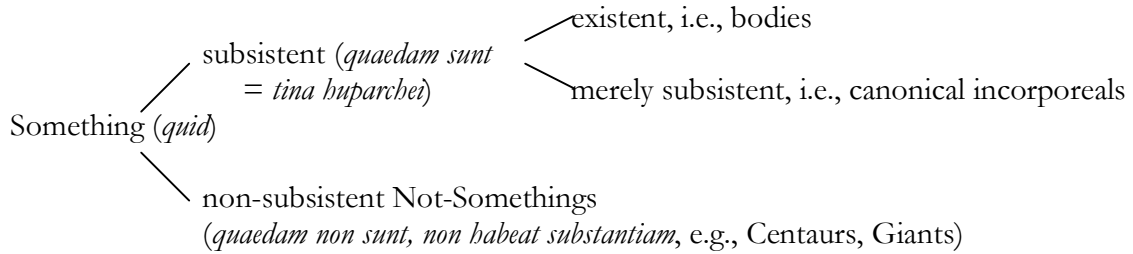


Fig. 1 — Ju’s ontology

Brunschwig, on the other hand, argues that Seneca puts forth fictitious individuals as non-existent because incorporeals have been made quasi-existent, thus a species of existent; and Seneca couldn’t call himself a Stoic, even an unorthodox one, if he did not countenance non-existent Somethings.³³⁴

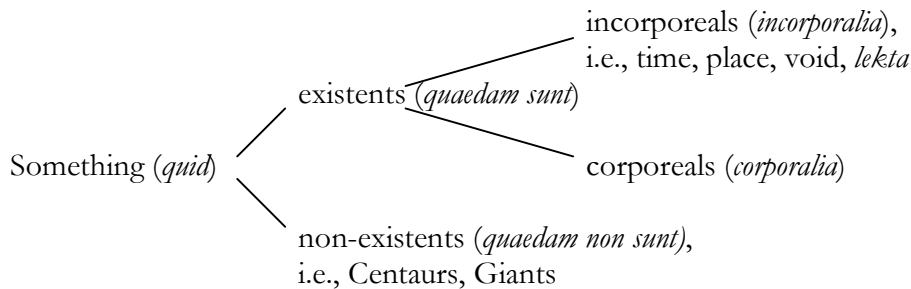


Fig. 2 —Brunschwig’s account of Seneca and the Stoics

The problem with Brunschwig’s reading is that Seneca explicitly disowns the Stoic schema, so it is out of place to say he is motivated to fill the non-existent Something slot. The structure of Seneca’s letter as I read it is as follows:

- i. Preamble on the poverty of Latin, where Seneca offers *essentia* as a translation of the Greek *ousia*, and aligns *quod est* with the Greek *on*, i.e., corporeal existence. Promise to enumerate the six ways Plato expresses the idea of *quod est* (1-8)

³³⁴ 1988: 51 ff, 2003: 220 ff.; see also Mansfeld, who thinks Seneca rejects Fig. 2 (1992: n. 22, 84-5; n. 48, 98-100); and Caston, who endorses Fig. 2 (1999)

- ii. An introduction to his own genera of being, reckoning from particulars to the primary notion, i.e., from Socrates up to the highest and most general, *quod est* (8-12)
- iii. Forecast of an additional, higher genus of being for the Stoics (13)
- iv. “Proof” that the genus *quod est* has rightly been placed first, a top-down reckoning of the ontology as he sees it; see Fig. 3 below (14)
- v. Introduction of Something (*quid*) as the highest Stoic genus; see Fig. 4 below (15)
- vi. Six ways Plato expresses the idea of *quod est*, delivery of promise made in 8 (16-22)
- vii. Defense of the relevance of such distinctions to living the good life (22-37)

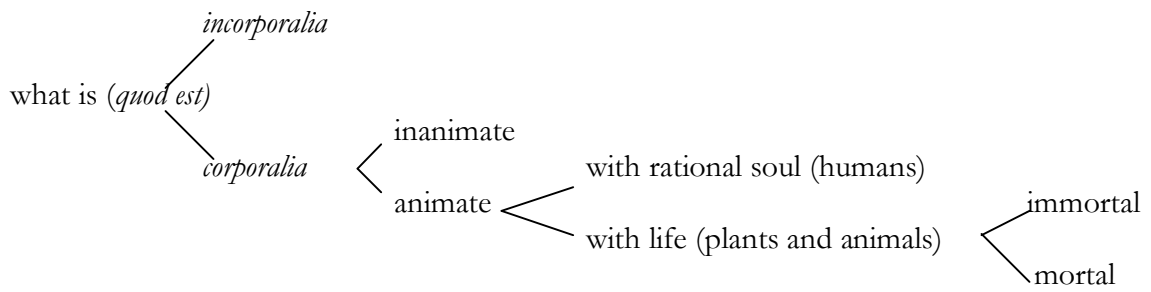


Fig. 3 — Seneca’s own ontology

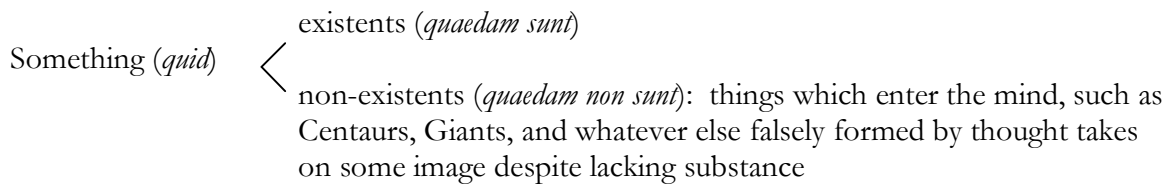


Fig. 4 — Seneca’s account of Stoic ontology

Fig. 3 illustrates the ontology Seneca endorses for himself in section 14. Then, he flags the fact that the Stoics would set above *quod est* another, more primary genus. But for Seneca to say the Stoics place *quid* above *quod est* is not to attribute to them the division of *quod est* into corporeals and incorporeals as in Fig. 3, nor to accept for himself the Stoic division he gives of *quid* into *quaedam sunt* and *non sunt*, as in Fig. 4. Brunschwig must be assuming both to argue that the combined view

(Fig. 2) represents the considered Stoic position. Clear of these unlicensed assumptions, *Epistle 58* tells us just what we find in Fig. 4—as Pasquale Pasquino says, “on ne peut pas y trouver d’avantage.”³³⁵

Still, there is much to learn from Seneca’s brief description of non-existent Somethings. Victor Caston finds in it the primary evidence that being an object of thought is a criterion of reality for the Stoics, since “*Anything we can think of* falls ‘within the nature things’ and thus is something.”³³⁶ I agree with Caston, of course, since he endorses the thinkability criterion. But I am making the further and distinct point that only *proper* subjects of thought are Something, and that proper subjects of thought are available to thought in a certain way, i.e., intersubjectively, which is to say objectively. Thus the relevance of this text is not just that it supports a tripartite Stoic ontology by explicitly countenancing mythological creatures, but that it tells us quite a bit about the nature of their subsistence according to thought. First, I take it that the phrase *things that enter the mind*³³⁷ aligns with the Stoics’ objectivity criterion for Something, being a proper object of thought and discourse—can we say true and false things about it? Incorporeals subsisting according to body pass this test. For example, we can say of the drill sergeant’s exercise (let’s say it was a jumping jack) that it involved waving both arms but not hopping on one foot; or that time and void are infinite. Figments and limits also pass the test: we can say truly that the Centaur is half horse, that a point is the limit of a line, and that the now is a joining of the past and future.

Insofar as we can refer to and say things about mythological creatures, that is, insofar as the commanding faculty is impressed in relation to them (as the drill sergeant passage taught us) such that they enter, strike or present themselves to the mind as proper objects of thought and discourse we can take Seneca’s testimony as consistent with Stoic doctrine. Figments may not be the only things Stoics admit to the ontology by this criterion but if the report is accurate it still does the job Seneca needs, which is to make the Stoics’ highest genus look unnecessary. As with Platonist reports about Stoic views on surface and time, Seneca’s testimony is not wrong (they do countenance mythological creatures) but not wholly correct either (Centaur is hardly the only reason they posit Something as the highest genus: there are also limits and, of course, the incorporeals). Thus I take availability for thought and discourse to remain criterial for being Something in Seneca’s report.

The second thing to note in the Seneca passage above is that being *falsely formed by thought* is perfectly compatible with being *in the world’s nature*. This does not, of course, mean that they take Centaurs and Giants to exist corporeally; it means only that mythological creatures are part of the objective furniture of things—we really do create these entities.³³⁸ Being falsely formed by thought is to be understood as a case where the entity in question cannot be referred back to body the way incorporeals can—there are no material Centaurs or Giants that underlie the truth or falsity of our statements about them (except insofar as the texts and illustrations are material, of course).

³³⁵ 1978: 336

³³⁶ 1999: section 2.2

³³⁷ Alternatively: *things that strike the mind* (Sedley (2005: 124)); and *choses qui se présentent à l’esprit* (Brunschwig (1988: 54))

³³⁸ As Paul Veyne also attests: “l’idée de centaure est dans la nature,” *Sénèque, Entretiens, Lettres à Lucilius*, Paris (1993), note on *Ep.* 58, 15; I do not, however, agree that Seneca has confused his non-existents in citing figments instead of incorporeals.

So, being a pure product of thought is no *per se* barrier to being real for the Stoics. But then the question immediately arises: does *anything* falsely formed by thought count as Something; and if it's not being formed by thought that makes something real, what is it? The answer is that only what *takes on some image* (or imagistic consistency)³³⁹ despite lacking substance,³⁴⁰ i.e., despite being a pure product of thought, is real. Some one person dreamed up the first centaur, but what makes the Centaur Something is that it has taken on a representational or imagistic consistency through the texts and illustrations that portray token centaurs. There are now certain properties that characterize the Centaur, like being half man and half horse, in virtue of which we can say true and false things about him. Likewise, the perfect triangle really is Something, an idealized geometrical figure. The side of a triangle is straight, but not like the edge of my countertop is straight.

To say that figments *present themselves* to the mind highlights their objective availability, as does their treatment as the *product* (“*issu*”) of thought; and to say that they *end up* taking on some imagistic consistency signals that the path is from subjective images in the imagination, to token texts and illustrations, to an objective entity defined or characterized by certain attributes. The objectivity of the figment is reminiscent of the drill sergeant passage above (passage B). Just as the token motions of the drill sergeant standing at a distance to provide himself as a model give rise to an incorporeal impressor with a nature like that of the *lekta* (i.e., the pattern of his motions), so too the token mental images, stories and illustrations give rise to the Centaur, Something with derivative but objective reality. There is an important disanalogy as well: the pattern of the drill sergeant's motions subsists according to a body that really moves in such a way; figments, on the other hand, do not correspond to any such reality. But the fact that there are no actual (corporeal) centaurs does not impugn the reality of the fictitious entity, which subsists according to token thoughts, texts and illustrations (which are corporeal).

Long & Sedley's tripartite ontology, which divides Something into the corporeal, the incorporeal, and what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, is in a unique position to capture this analogy (complete with disanalogy). Fictional entities have reality analogous to the pattern that emerges from the drill sergeant's motions, which is captured by saying they all have a certain derivative reality, or subsistence. The disanalogy is captured by the distinction between being an incorporeal as opposed to that which is neither corporeal nor incorporeal. An incorporeal is literally the body-less dimension inherited from the corporeal world. Take away the drill sergeant, and what's left over is the pattern of his motions. Now, while it's true that if you abstract the ink, paper and token mental image of Centaurs, what's left over is the image or persona of the Centaur as a figment, there is an important difference between the two cases. Incorporeals are grounded in the way things are: to the pattern of the drill sergeant's motions there correspond all his token motions; but no actual horse-man corresponds to the Centaur. Hence, as to the reality of the Centaur, the question whether it's corporeal or incorporeal does not apply; it's neither an actual horse-man nor an incorporeal inheriting its positive physical characteristics from actual horse men (since there aren't

³³⁹ As Jacques Brunschwig (1988) robustly translates the Latin. Sedley (2005): “...whatever formed by false thinking, begins to have some image...”

³⁴⁰ Again, there is disagreement as to how to translate *substantia* here. Sedley (2005), Pasquino (2006) and Ju (2009) take Seneca to align *substantia* with the Greek *hupostasis* and thus translate the term *subsistence*. But Seneca has been so careful to align *quod est* with *to on* and *essentia* with *ousia* that one would expect him to have announced such a correspondence if he intended it. Brunschwig translates *substantia* as *existence*, which nicely captures the fact that Stoics deny these entities are corporeal. I take my own translation, *substance*, to capture this same aspect of Stoic theory without being a technical term or aligning with any particular Greek term (certainly not *ousia*).

any). Nonetheless, we can say true and false things about Centaurs, because they are indeed characterized by certain attributes. In this respect, they merit a place in the Stoic ontology as *proper* subjects of thought, intersubjectively available in a way that the average products of my imagination are not. Hence we can see that being a thought construct is perfectly compatible with having objective reality.

Furthermore, Long & Sedley's tripartite schema is the only one that takes Seneca at his word (that Centaurs and Giants are non-existent Somethings for the Stoics) and maintains a coherent Stoic ontology. Those who posit the category of Not-Somethings make the Stoic ontology downright incoherent: Something is and is not the highest genus of reality because between Something and nothing at all there are intermediate Not-Somethings. This result strikes me as uncharitable to an extreme, and therefore to be avoided—especially when there are perfectly good alternatives at hand. Finally, another virtue of the Long & Sedley ontology is that the division into existents and subsistents (which includes both incorporeals and figments) fits seamlessly with the idea that the Stoics were operating with two criteria of reality instead of one. The strong corporeal criterion delineates existence, while the minimal Something criterion identifies a derivative mode of reality, namely subsistence. I have been arguing that the first element of the Something criterion is being a *proper* subject of thought, and that this element conveys objective availability to the mind. If I am right, then figments (and *lekta*) show that mind-dependence is no *per se* barrier to being real

IV.3 Objective Particulars

I can now expand my characterization of subsistence according to thought as what does not correspond to any body, with an account of how these entities are nonetheless grounded in the corporeal and therefore proper for a strict physicalist ontology. Taking on some imagistic consistency is to be understood as the emergence of an entity that is not spatio-temporally continuous like the incorporeals are but is nonetheless an individual. The token texts and illustrations are corporeal, and the mind that produces them is also corporeal. What subsists on corporeal tokens is an intelligible entity that has taken on a life of its own to become a proper object of thought and discourse in its own right. What makes Chiron, for example, a particular is the fact that he has taken on a life of his own from particular texts and illustrations. So, one can say that because Chiron subsists according to these texts and illustrations (say, in Megara), he is a different individual from Lapithus subsisting according to those other texts and illustrations (in Athens). The Not-Someone test was used to screen out universals like Man. While Chiron may subsist in both Athens and Megara, if he is depicted in both places, once one has identified the texts and illustrations from which he takes on his imagistic consistency his particularity has been established such that he will not be present as the same individual according to a different set of texts and illustrations.

So while the Stoics did use the term *subsistence* (*hupostasis*) to describe intelligible reality, it does not amount to linguistic quibbling or proto-Meinongianism. Rather, the Stoics identify three modes of spatiotemporal reality whose differences can be clearly articulated. In fact, the point of making Something the highest criterion and including mythological creatures in the nature of things is precisely to capture the fact that there is just one world, this material world.

IV.4 Application to *Lekta*

With the distinction between subsistence according to body and according to thought in hand, I would now like to sketch a possible solution to the question of how Stoic *lekta* can be *sayable* independent of any *sayings*, in a robust passive modal sense.

The proposition that Cato is walking is the logical or linguistic correlate of my thought, my thought as expressed in a sentence. Only I can have my thoughts, but ‘Cato is walking’ is something which could fit the impression in any person’s mind.³⁴¹

The puzzle is this: if the *lekton* gets its propositional content from the impression it expresses, how can it be something that could fit anyone’s impression? What makes it true that when two people utter the same sentence they have said the same thing? I raised this problem earlier, when I described the subsistence of the *lekton* according to body: how can *lekta* expressing individual impressions be sufficiently objective for the Stoics to make them proper objects of thought and discourse? My tentative solution is to say that *lekta* subsist both according to body and according to thought, where subsistence according to thought is understood as taking on some imagistic consistency. The *lekton* that subsists according to body is a token *saying*; the *lekton* that subsists according to thought is a *sayable*. Here is how I get there.

I said that the third kind of Something, that which is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, is what subsists only according to thought. It includes *whatever falsely formed by thought takes on some image despite lacking substance*. Several apparent problems with my suggested application to *lekta* arise immediately. First of all, the *lekton* is undeniably incorporeal so any solution that assimilates them to their neuter cousins won’t do. Secondly, it is out of bounds to characterize the *lekton* as the product of *false* thought since the *kataleptic* impression is the Stoics’ well-attested criterion of truth; so any account that makes them inherently false won’t do either. Finally, I have admitted that the Seneca passage is of limited reliability concerning other parts of Stoic doctrine, namely incorporeals and bodies; so the ice may be quite thin.

That said, there are also several good reasons to think the *lekta* subsist both according to body and according to thought. First and foremost, the *lekton* according to body is by definition a product of thought in that it gets its content from the corporeal impression it expresses. Now, the body according to which it subsists just is the mind and its thoughts, so it would be surprising if they were not related to figments and limits. If the *lekton* is characterized as a product of thought but not necessarily of false thought, which is the defining characteristic of what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, then the way is still open to explore *lekta* as subsisting according to thought,³⁴² albeit in their own incorporeal way. Indeed, if the order of nature includes even those things falsely formed by thought, then those that come from impressions of the corporeal world should be no stretch for the Stoics, particularly given the importance of the *kataleptic* impression as the criterion of truth and their strongly empiricist account of concept formation. The defining characteristic of what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal is that there are no bodies corresponding to them—there are no

³⁴¹ LS (1987: 200)

³⁴² The locution becomes cumbersome and even confusing here because the *lekta* are already products of thought in their subsistence according to body (the rational impression). Because I take the *lekta* and their neuter cousins to be related in important ways, however, I will retain the *according to thought* locution for the *lekton qua* lexical meaning that emerges out of its token uses

corporeal Centaurs, Giants or perfect triangles; they are inventions. The *lekton*, on the other hand, is first and foremost a tool for expressing the impressions made on us by the world, thus its content is grounded in a body that makes them categorically different from figments and limits.³⁴³ Phantasms and sense impressions are significantly different species mental entity.

The second good reason to think *lekta* subsist according to thought is that taking on some image despite lacking substance is not just compatible with but highly felicitous for the *lekta* and their puzzle. From token incorporeal sayables (better: *sayings*) used to express particular thoughts, a lexical meaning emerges—a *sayable* according to thought about which we can say true and false things, like what it means. From the token instances of people asking what time it is, the lexical meaning of “What time is it?” takes on some image³⁴⁴ and becomes an incorporeal subsistent according to thought in its own right. It is available for mention, a proper object of thought and discourse over and above but dependent on individual utterances. A token “What time is it?” as asked by Cato is an incorporeal question with an answer, whereas the lexical meaning independent of utterance, i.e., the *sayable* according to thought, does not have an answer because it’s not really a question. On the other hand, there is an important sense in which the *lekton* according to thought really *is* a question: that is its lexical form.

Thus I am suggesting that one can find in the Stoics a rather sophisticated and detailed *meaning is use* doctrine. The *sayable* meaning is the general, lexical meaning that emerges from token *sayings* (uses).³⁴⁵ What is sayable in the robust passive modal sense does not have a truth value (to use the *axiōma* as our paradigm *lekton*) because it does not bring forth a particular impression tying or indexing the content to a time, place and world.³⁴⁶ Nonetheless, insofar as it emerges from token incorporeal sayings and we can say objectively true and false things about it (like what it means), the *lekton kat’ epinoian* is a proper object of thought and discourse in its own right. So, on the one hand, when someone says “It’s raining” in Athens and another person says “It’s raining” in Megara, they do not utter the same *lekton* according to body because they express propositions whose content is not the same (since one says it of Athens and the other of Megara). On the other hand, they do say the same thing in that they share one and the same *lekton* according to thought—a lexical meaning that has taken on some imagistic consistency despite lacking corporeal substance. The same will apply to “Cato is walking” in that different tokens will be different *sayings* (*lekta kath’ hupostasin*) but will be the same *sayable* (*kat’ epinoian*) in that they have the same lexical meaning.

Seneca’s passage may therefore be telling of Stoic doctrine beyond Centaurs and Giants, after all. If we take him to have reported truthfully (even if incompletely) when presenting the Stoics in support of his own pseudo-Platonic ontology, we may be able to recover a core notion of

³⁴³ Seneca, *Ep.* 117.13 (33E); S.E., *M.* 8.70 (33C), 8.11-12 (33B); D.L., 7.49 (33D), 7.57 (33A), 7.63 (33F), 7.64 (33G); Ammonius, *In Ar. De int.* 17,24-8 (33N)

³⁴⁴ The Latin *imagine* is properly translated as *image* but it’s important to recognize that it need not imply that the image is a picture, copy or otherwise literal likeness; the term can also be translated *representation*, *echo*, *shadow*, or *conception*, which shows the term is perfectly compatible with linguistic entities like sayables.

³⁴⁵ And what you mean by your words is determined how you use them in particular utterances, i.e., *sayings*; call this the fundamental sense in which meaning is use. I am using the phrase, however, in what I take to be a secondary sense for the Stoics, which is to capture the general *sayable* meaning that emerges from particular sayings. This need not seem mysterious; it is no more than what dictionaries report. Still, I recognize that the phrase by itself is not entirely clear, so I hereby signal that it is the notion of lexical meaning as a function of individual uses that I have in mind when I say the Stoics have a certain *meaning is use* doctrine.

³⁴⁶ As LS observe (1987: 205)

subsistence according to thought that explains both the metaphysical status of what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, and the objectivity of *lekta* as incorporeal, mind-dependent objective particulars. The core notion of subsistence according to thought (*kat' epinoian*) would be of something that takes on some image, in relation to which the commanding faculty is impressed. The crucial difference between mental constructs of literature and mathematics on the one hand, and dialectic on the other, is that figments and limits are *falsely* formed by thought—there are no material Centaurs or perfect triangles corresponding to these entities. The content of the *lekta*, by contrast, is grounded in corporeal impressors. Even false *lekta* will have their content grounded in the objective reality of the world. If I should say that Cato sits when really Cato is walking, the reference to Cato and the content of the predicate *is walking* come from concrete cases of Cato and walking that I have encountered in the past. Thus my account need not conflict with the role of the *kataleptic* impression as criterion of truth or neuter the *lekta* by divorcing them from corporeal impressors.

That said, the *lekta* considered as subsisting according to thought are geldings of a sort in that they lack a truth value. This is to be expected since the Stoics are so clearly committed to truth value and full content being tied to use, which makes the notion of the *lekton* subsisting according to body (the rational impression) undeniably primary. Indeed, the most complete *lekton* is deictic. As we move from the *lekta* we use to the *lekta* we mention in dialectic, there is a loss of potency (particularity of content), but this does not force these essential entities of dialectic out of the category of incorporeal. On the contrary, the Stoics are as committed as ever on my view to *lekta* as body-less, getting their content (whether fully particular in use or not) from underlying body (the impressions made on us by the world).³⁴⁷

I recognize that this last section takes me well beyond textual evidence and that I am still on thin ice. It may not be what the Stoics (or any one Stoic) thought, but it is an account that should appeal to them based on what we do know and thus something I can recommend in good conscience. The distinction between subsistence according to body and according to thought renders the tripartite ontology coherent, makes sense of hitherto problematic texts, and may even shed light on the elusive nature of Stoic *lekta*. That it is speculative cannot be helped. But with a principle of subsistence according to thought in hand, we can give more weight to considerations like Long & Sedley's that the Stoics were fond of tripartition (e.g., good-bad-indifferent, true-false-neither, same-different-neither).³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Perhaps on this score the Stoics are best considered externalists about meaning if the content of the impression depends so strongly on the world itself; on the other hand, the inalienable dependence of meaning on mental state speaks to internalist sympathies. Needless to say, I cannot pursue this line of questioning here.

³⁴⁸ LS (1987: 165); see also Barnes (1999: 182)

Why the Stoic ontology is Principled, Coherent and Comprehensive

I will conclude by summarizing the Stoic ontology as I have developed it. I began with Brunschwig’s observation that the Stoic innovation was in forging two relatively independent criteria of reality in response to Plato’s *Sophist*. The strong criterion for existence is the action/passion principle satisfied only by bodies, which the Stoics have broadened to include the virtues and other qualities that posed problems for the Giants. On the other hand, the Stoics deny the Giants’ core thesis that only what can be squeezed in the hand is real. The Stoics are happy to admit intangible realities as well, but not in the sense that the friends of the Forms do. It is here that the relative independence of the Stoics’ two criteria is operative: the intangible realities that count as non-existent Somethings always subsist according to body in some way—even products of thought. But little effort has been made to develop the Stoics’ second, minimal criterion of reality.

So, I developed the Something criterion in two steps: one, as a measure of objectivity; and two, as a measure of particularity. The measure of objectivity—whether something is a *proper* object of thought, is met either by entities that subsist according to body or those that have taken on some imagistic consistency despite lacking substance and therefore subsist according to thought. The measure of particularity, the *outis* test, dictates that only properly determinate individuals will be Something. Incorporeals are properly determinate in virtue of their subsistence according to body *kath’ hypostasin*; they inherit their particularity from the bodies on which they depend. Reality *kat’ epinoian* is properly determinate in virtue of having taken on some imagistic consistency, a life of its own now independent of any particular thought but still grounded in the corporeal thoughts in virtue of which they are determinately characterized as they are.

I have illustrated my proposed ontology in Fig. 5, below.

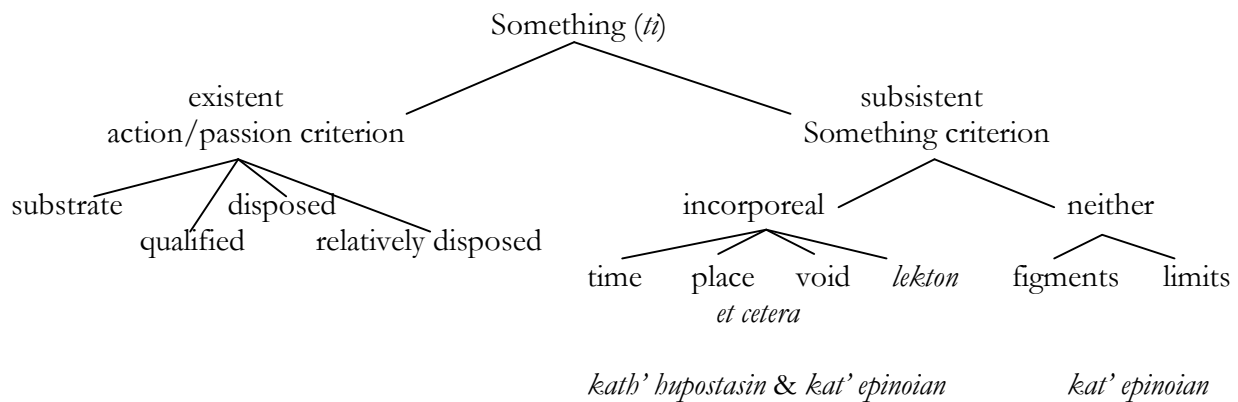


Fig. 5 — A coherent and comprehensive Stoic ontology

Adopting Long & Sedley's tripartite ontology removes two of the usual temptations to posit Not-Something as an intermediate category between Something and nothing at all: figments and mathematical limits. My contribution, that the Stoics may have been operating with a systematic distinction between reality *kath' hypostasin* and *kat' epinoian*, supports the tripartite ontology by explaining why subsistence falls into two kinds. Incorporeals, on the one hand, have positive physical characteristics inherited from underlying body. What is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, on the other hand, only has reality *kat' epinoian* because there are no bodies to which we refer when talking about them. So even though the precise parts of time are *kat' epinoian*, they are carving physical reality *kath' hypostasin* and are therefore not mere figments. What we refer to when we talk about Mickey Mouse, however, only has reality *kat' epinoian*. The objective reality of such figments is due to the token thoughts, texts and illustrations that are all themselves products of thought. But this is still a realist physical story insofar as our thoughts are corporeal and the corporeal texts and illustrations give rise to an objectively subsisting entity about which we can say true and false things.³⁴⁹

Surface and limit no longer make the Stoics conflicted about their ontology either. When we speak of the surface of a body, like my kitchen counter, we speak of something incorporeal (or even corporeal for that matter, as in Proclus' report that shapes are bodies). When, on the other hand, we speak of mathematical limits we speak of something that is neither corporeal nor incorporeal. So it's not that the Stoics were confused about surface and limit, but that there are two different phenomena at issue. Both have a perfectly good treatment in the tripartite ontology so there is no fuel for Not-Somethings with figments and limits.

Another temptation to posit Not-Somethings is concepts; the universal Man has become the paradigm case. There are two nearly identical passages that say concepts are not Somethings or qualified for the Stoics, and that they are instead *as if (bosanei)* Something or *as if* qualified.³⁵⁰ Sedley³⁵¹ and Long & Sedley³⁵² have taken this to indicate concepts are *quasi*-entities in "metaphysical limbo" between Something and nothing at all. Brunschwig, of course, leans heavily on these two passages in arguing outright for the category of Not-Somethings.³⁵³ Victor Caston, on the other hand, has suggested that *bosanei* does not signal a metaphysical limbo but the fact that concepts are *characterized by* their attributes rather than having or exemplifying them as bodies do; he goes on to argue that concepts were considered Something by the early Stoics, then dropped in favor of *lekta* after Chrysippus' Not-Someone argument. I am sympathetic to Caston's account, especially to the reading of *bosanei* as an indication that concepts are characterized by their attributes and no mark of ontological limbo. I am less certain that concepts were Something according to Zeno and Cleanthes, though. But whether concepts turn out to be Something (with Caston) or to have no formal place in the Stoic ontology (as I suspect) is immaterial to the point that there is no evidence or motivation for a monster Stoic category of Not-Somethings. Figments, limits and concepts can all be handled within (or entirely outside) the ontology.

³⁴⁹ Thus I disagree with Denyer (1988) who says that Pegasus and the like are not objects of reference but it is still somehow true that Pegasus is a winged horse.

³⁵⁰ Stob. 1.136,21-137,6 (30A); DL 7.60-1 (30C)

³⁵¹ 1985

³⁵² LS (1987: 181)

³⁵³ As do many others. See Pasquino (1978); Tzamalikos (1991: 540); D. Frede (1990: 216); Bréhier (1928: 18). See also Charles Brittain (2002: 265 ff.)

The only remaining bur is the all, *to pan*, which consists of the entire corporeal world plus the extra-cosmic void.³⁵⁴ Brunschwig takes the all as a pure mental construct, and as such (along with figments and concepts) a Not-Something. Again, I will ask: what is the phenomenon? The world as a whole is a finite corporeal, while void is an infinite incorporeal. What are we to make of the combination of these? We are used to seeing what happens when body is abstracted, i.e., what it is to be body-less. It's a new twist on the theme of incorporeal subsistence to offer something by addition instead of subtraction. So let's see what the Something criterion yields in application to the all. First, as to being a proper subject of thought, we can ask whether the all depends for its reality on being thought about. The answer is that the all, subsisting according to the corporeal world as a whole plus the extra-cosmic void,³⁵⁵ is perfectly indifferent to our thinking about it and thus a proper subject of thought—world plus void really is all there is. Secondly, as to particularity, we can ask whether the all passes the *outis* test. Insofar as the all subsists according to the fully particular corporeal world and the extra-cosmic void (itself particular in virtue of its subsistence according to the corporeal world) the all is a legitimate particular as well. The *outis* test is thus easily adapted from Athens and Megara to this world and a hypothetical alternate universe to show the particularity of the all (as we did with void and time): If the all subsists here, then it does not subsist there. The all subsisting according to this world and extra-cosmic void cannot be the same as the all subsisting according to that world and that extra-cosmic void. The case is analogous to the parking place: if it subsists according to these delimiting cars in Athens, then it can't be subsisting according to those cars in Megara. Hence the all, *to pan*, counts as an objective particular for the Stoics, and is therefore no evidence that the Stoics posited Not-Somethings.

Another benefit to the ontology of Fig. 5 is that an open-ended list of incorporeals is no threat to the canon or to the ontological category of incorporeals. I have indicated this result in Fig. 5 with *et cetera* below the canonical incorporeals. The phenomenon of incorporeality is found throughout the natural world, so it makes sense that the Stoics would highlight a core group of cases while acknowledging the phenomenon globally, so to speak. The priority of the Something criterion to its cases is thus upheld by principled variations in the list of incorporeals. Everything described as an incorporeal or as being *like* the incorporeals fits the common profile of being 1) a proper subject of thought subsisting according to body, and 2) a particular that passes the *outis* test. Anything that's Something is an objective particular.

What about the challenge that Plato's Forms are allowed into the ontology according to the thinkability criterion? The response is that, considered *qua* general entities outside space and time, the Forms have no place in the ontology.³⁵⁶ Any reality Plato's Forms do have in the Stoic ontology is *qua* figments. By design, Plato's Forms are neither bodies nor incorporeals subsisting according to body. Nonetheless the Forms do have a certain reality as fictions that have taken on some imagistic consistency according to Plato's dialogues, just as the Centaur subsists according to token images, texts and illustrations. In this respect only, Forms are objectively real and particular. They will pass the *outis* test just insofar as Centaurs do, as figments whose determinate character subsists according to the token instances.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ SE, *M.* 9.332 (44A)

³⁵⁵ As Bréhier agrees (1928: 50)

³⁵⁶ The Stoics were eliminativists about Forms, as Caston argues (1999)

³⁵⁷ As opposed to Brunschwig's treatment of Mickey Mouse as a *faux* particular (1988: 33)

Another virtue of the Fig. 5 ontology is that it makes the most of polemical testimony. When Proclus tells us that time subsists in mere thought, we can acknowledge the respect in which it's true (*kat' epinoian*) and the respect in which it's not (*kata hupostasin*). Proclus has reported something true but incomplete; we thereby account for and even embrace the polemical context without writing off the testimony. Puzzles about the infinite divisibility of the continuum also dissolve when we apply the distinction. Considered *kath' hupostasin*, the world is a continuous and infinite whole with no proper parts (natural joints notwithstanding); considered *kat' epinoian*, it is infinitely divisible (or at least as far as we choose to keep dividing). I argued that Diogenes' testimony that Posidonius "retained surface both in thought and as subsistent" is testament to a guiding principle of Stoic ontology. It may be impossible to determine whether this was an articulated distinction in Stoic doctrine, or something bubbling beneath the surface (no pun intended). However, the coherence that results from my reading is mutually reinforcing evidence that the Stoics were alive to the distinction between reality *kath' hupostasin* and *kat' epinoian*.

In what, then, does Stoic nominalism consist? Certainly its core is that only bodies exist. But this commitment is only innovative and interesting insofar as *existence* is a technical term for the Stoics, in contrast to *subsistence*. By making body the *sine qua non* of all reality, as opposed to the only kind of reality, Stoic physicalism takes on a new and controversial dimension. What's newsworthy is that in positing Something as the highest genus of reality set over existence on the one hand and *subsistence* on the other, the Stoics recognize immaterial entities without breach of their physicalist commitments. I have shown how Stoic incorporeals can be considered *body-less* rather than a-corporeal or outside space-time. Being body-less is a negative concept in that incorporeals lack body, but these entities are not without positive physical characteristics. Likewise, what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal is a negative conception in that it corresponds to no body, but the phenomenon is grounded in our corporeal thoughts, texts and illustrations so that we remain within the spatiotemporal domain.

The resulting Stoic ontology is principled in operating with two criteria of reality instead of one. In addition to a newly robust existential criterion, which licenses a materialist analysis of the virtues and other qualities, the Stoics developed a minimal Something criterion that makes room for objective particulars that are intangible but perfectly real; they are subsistent rather than existent. What counts as Something subsistent is not reducible to body, but still subject to a physical analysis of its objectivity and particularity. The Something criterion, I have argued, applies to all incorporeals, including the *lekta*, and can account for problem cases like figments, limits, concepts, and the all. The Stoic ontology is also coherent. The Stoics are not closet Platonists with conflicting criteria, which is why they are not just a patchwork of the Gods' and Giants' views. And the Stoics do not undo their hard-won progress by positing Not-Somethings between Something and nothing at all. To posit Not-Somethings is to deny that Something is the highest and most comprehensive ontological category—in direct opposition to perfectly good testimony to the contrary. Crucially, it is unnecessary to posit the category when problem cases like figments, limits, concepts, and the all have a natural account according to the tripartite ontology. Stoic metaphysics is therefore principled, coherent and comprehensive—everything is Something, and nothing is not.

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